

# RAPID EYE



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NUMEROLOGY & SERIAL KILLERS ● GENESIS P. ORRIDGE  
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# RAPID EYE

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# PART ONE

## Twilight Language Ian Blake

**“There are no coincidences/  
But sometimes the pattern is  
more obvious...”**

Neil Innes

In the mid 1970s American psychic researcher Peter A. Jordan made an interesting discovery. “I learned that the most spontaneous and instinctual methods of research often lead to the brightest discoveries,” he wrote later, “(and) could not escape the conviction that an investigation guided purely by intellect was empty. I learned to appreciate moments of intuition which came across my path, and to grab hold of them as vigorously as I did the familiar logic of the philosopher’s trade. With each new case I explored, the less I discarded as meaningless and irrelevant, and the more I came to view as symbolic and vital. In a sense I was reborn.”<sup>1</sup>

Mr Jordan subsequently worked with a team of psychometrists, basing much of his speculation on their feelings and impressions. Such an approach is of course entirely contrary to the spirit of true scientific inquiry. Nevertheless, it would almost certainly win the approval of American writer/researcher Michael Anthony Hoffman, whose ‘American Mystica’ column was one of the highlights of *Fortean Times*<sup>2</sup> during the early ’80s. Hoffman is one of the most impressive of all modern conspiracy theorists. Formerly a resident of New York, he now lives and works in California. What sets him apart from others of the same ilk is the extraordinary range and insight of his studies. If he possesses one crucial insight it is a recognition that many seemingly random crimes of violence actually conform to an underlying pattern. Hoffman refers to this pattern as ‘Twilight Language’. Its function, he says, is to imprint specific messages onto the collective unconscious, thus achieving “a most subtle *haute* mind control.”



In general the preliminaries of any investigation tend to follow much the same pattern. The particular must be sorted out from the general, fact separated from fiction, and a sound basis established for future work. The study of Twilight Language, on the other hand, differs from this procedure in several important respects. Like Peter A. Jordan's ground-breaking work, it relies far more on "intuition, spontaneity and a little help from the Wyrd Sisters."

According to Hoffman, the murders committed by David Berkowitz were a Twilight Language scenario par excellence. Berkowitz, who achieved notoriety as 'Son of Sam', kept New York in a state of terror during the mid-70s. Over a 13-month period he killed seven young people and wounded eight more, usually firing at them point-blank with a .44 handgun. When his crimes are analysed in detail a number of frightening patterns begin to emerge. The famous 'Son of Sam' correspondence sent by Berkowitz to NY columnist James Breslin is a case in point. Colin Wilson dismisses this material as "rambling and incoherent" in his *Encyclopaedia of Modern Murder* (written in collaboration with Donald Seaman). Hoffman, on the other hand, finds in it "disguise-words representing the kalas or 'spiritual' fecal matter present during magical operations."<sup>3</sup> More to the point, he says, it also contains a sigil borrowed from 19th century occultist Eliphas Levi signifying a pact with 'descending hierarchies'.<sup>4</sup>

Gannet-Westchester journalist Maury Terry, he continues, "points out that the shooting immediately following the use of the Levi symbol happened at the 'Elephas' discotheque. Mr Terry was also able to learn that one of the Sam missives has been signed 'Chubby Behemoth', and links this quite rightly to Elephas via the Latin for 'elephant'... What Mr Terry has omitted is the fact that a very important ritual involving magica sexualis and Twilight Language took place at the *St Francis* hotel in *San Francisco* over 50 years ago. It was here that Fatty Arbuckle, an acclaimed silent screen comedian, *raped Virginia Rappe* with a wine bottle, producing the 'must' of the Elephant. According to psychic researcher James Shelby Downard, Fatty was fulfilling the role of the Chubby Behemoth in this rite, intended to imprint the Dreaming Mind of the Group Mind of the millions of people who learned of it, with a subliminal message."<sup>5</sup>

Hoffman doesn't specify the exact nature of this alleged message, but we may be sure that it was something suitably sinister.

All this may of course be a simple case of torturing data to fit an a priori model. On the other hand, Hoffman is chiefly concerned

with the *latent* content of reality as opposed to its manifest content. He works in an area where rational commonsense scientific attitudes have no place. It is therefore only natural that the ordered processes of cause and effect should occasionally be turned completely upside down.

Equally fascinating is his study of the 'double initial murders', which took place in Rochester, NY, between 1971 and 1976. In this case the killer matched wits with the police by laying a trail of clues for them to follow. The first and most obvious of these was the occurrence of double initials in each of the victims' names: Carmen Colon, Wanda Walkowicz, Michelle Maenza and Michelle McMurray.<sup>6</sup> The police, lacking Hoffman's perspicacity, discounted this as pure coincidence. "We decided a long time ago that the initials had nothing to do with it," a spokesman Michael Iaculli declared. Other clues were far more esoteric, and here again it is possible to accuse Hoffman of trying to make the maximum of bricks from the minimum of straw. Analysing the name of the first victim, he points out that Carmen means 'enchanted' while colon signifies the small intestine or anus. It is also a Latin word meaning 'dove of love'. The dove is of course a symbol much used by the OTO; and this fact takes Hoffman a stage further in his chain of reasoning. During his famous 'North African Working', he points out, OTO chief Aleister Crowley was sodomised — a further anus/colon motif — as part of a rite meant to invoke Choronzon, the Dweller in the Abyss. The same ritual also involved the sacrifice of three doves; "and it was from the blood of these 'feathered colons' that Choronzon was supposed to materialize." The number of Choronzon is given in the Qabala as 333,<sup>7</sup> a multiple of 33. 'C' is the third letter of the alphabet, hence Carmen Colon's initials = 33. Carmen herself was abducted on Route 33. And so on.

(33 is for Hoffman the numerical key to a veritable Pandora's Box of contemporary paranoia. He sees in it a wealth of sinister occult/Masonic significance.)

What Hoffman is suggesting here is that Carmen Colon was actually sacrificed as part of an elaborate ritual designed to invoke Choronzon or some similar entity. From this premise he progresses to Kenneth Bianchi aka the Hillside Strangler, whose victims were left at sites 'sacred' to the OTO (Hoffman casually mentions in passing that one such site is allegedly haunted by a Choronzon-like Lovecraftian 'Lloigor'), and thence to homosexual mass murderer John Wayne Gacy, who claimed the lives of 33 boys in the Chicago area. "I'm interested in the *ceremonial* trappings of these murders," he says;



“trappings which the killers had to go to great lengths to devise, and expose themselves to considerable risks in order to execute.”

While it is impossible to deny the seductive charm of all this, certain objections must inevitably remain open. For one thing it is perhaps *too* unscientific, too much a matter of intuition and inspired guesswork. For another, it violates the age-old principle of Occam's Razor, which states that it is never worthwhile to put forward more theories than are absolutely necessary to explain a problem. It would be a tactical error to endorse Hoffman's dark metaphysical hypotheses too enthusiastically, without making some allowance for their rather convoluted nature.

Nevertheless, his work is always well-researched, well-written and thoroughly documented. It is also substantiated to some extent by the findings of several other researchers in the same field, notably Mae Brussell and James Shelby Downard.

Edwin Austin of the Mutilation Data Centre, Orange, Calif., also shares many of Hoffman's dark preoccupations. He too is fascinated by the interface between US officialdom and the occult. His research has allegedly turned up “a disproportionate number of victims of mass murderers who are close to law enforcement” — a recurring theme in Hoffman's work. He also points out that the murders committed by Richard Chase (Sacramento) and Ted Bundy (Seattle) were rich in Twilight Language significance. Bundy, for instance, killed over twenty girls in the mid-70s, usually strangling or battering them to death in an uncontrollable frenzy. He carried out several of these murders in accordance with an astrological timetable. The overall sequence also contained a disproportionate number of ‘double initial’ victims: Brenda Baker, Brenda Ball, Laura Lehi, Caryn Campbell, Kathy Kliner and Lisa Levy. Six out of twenty isn't enough to constitute a pattern, Austin concedes, but it *is* significantly higher than the distribution of double initials in the population as a whole. Bundy is now known to have had marginal occult connections, as did several of his victims. Was he too caught up, willy nilly, in some kind of Twilight Language stratagem? Some of the evidence may fall apart on close examination, but there is a definite residue of data here that cannot be dismissed as ‘mere’ coincidence.

In actual fact the annals of modern crime are full of cases like this, from the Tate-La Bianca murders (cf. the well-documented Manson/Beausoleil/Anger/Crowley connection) to California's infamous Zodiac killer, who committed five known murders and two serious woundings between December 1968 and October 1969. ‘Zodiac’ wore

a white hood emblazoned with an astrological sign and, in a phone call to an early morning talk show on TV, identified himself as 'Sam' (shades of David Berkowitz!). He also sent letters to the press containing cryptic symbols and a coded message which read in part: "When I die I will be reborn in Paradise and all (the people) I have killed will become my slaves..." Two of his victims survived despite massive injuries. The first of these, Michael Mageau, conformed to the now-familiar double initial pattern. Mageau subsequently gave a description of his attacker to the police, but Zodiac was never caught. In a letter to the San Francisco police written some years later he claimed to have killed a total of 37 people, but this figure has never been substantiated. Whatever the case, his activities were certainly motivated by what Colin Wilson refers to as 'magical thinking'.

The sceptical view would probably be to regard all this as a colossal mare's nest. And indeed, Hoffman does at times seem to cross over into pure fantasy. Nevertheless, some of his theories cannot be dismissed lightly. Many prominent killers, he points out, are known to have had ties with US officialdom or private law enforcement. Thus Lennon assassin Mark Chapman was a security guard, and David Berkowitz obtained his infamous 'Bulldog .44' handgun from a private security firm. Ted Bundy was a social worker and official close to the Governor of Washington; Jim Jones was a former San Francisco Housing Authority Commissioner; John Wayne Gacy had political affiliations and, at a Democratic rally in 1978, was photographed alongside Rosalynn Carter, wife of then-President Jimmy Carter, wearing a Secret Service insignia.

It is of course possible to ascribe these odd recurring features to nothing more than coincidence. On the other hand, both the FBI and CIA are known to resort to murder, on occasion, in order to further their own ends. Even Charles Manson and his followers are suspected by some conspiracy theorists of having worked for the FBI circa mid-1969. (see *Crawdaddy* no.66, Nov. 1976: "Was the FBI Scummy Enough To have Hired Manson?")<sup>8</sup> Then too there is evidence to suggest that US government agents monitored events at Jonestown, Guyana, during the crucial 'White Nights' period, presumably to obtain first-hand data on Jones' mind-control technique (a crude but effective synthesis of sex, drugs and ritual humiliation). Conspiracy buff Martti Koski of Rusko, Finland, has documentation to suggest that Jonestown was actually a CIA mind-control facility, part of the long-term 'MKULTRA SubProject 68' brainwashing programme. John P. Judge of Washington, DC, is in possession of similar material.



It may also be worth mentioning that, according to Hoffman, "on the day she died two Secret Service agents were spotted at the home of Wanda Walkowicz." The implication is clearly that they were somehow involved in her disappearance. But is it feasible to suppose that her *initials* were a deciding factor in the affair? Strangely enough, even this outlandish theory is not without corroborative backing in the annals of psychic research. It is well known that some people are more prone to psychic experiences than others. Fortean investigator Loren Coleman believes that a process of name 'selectivity' is involved somewhere along the line. Psychic entities "do not seem to be seen by people with the most common names," he points out... "some form of choosing is occurring beyond the limits of our understanding."<sup>9</sup> Veteran UFOlogist John A. Keel takes much the same view, noting the prevalence of "odd surnames such as Snitowski" among UFO witnesses. In *Our Haunted Planet* he adds an intriguing corollary, remarking that "like the demons and angels of yesteryear, the space people are fond of names containing *double letters*."

Double letters? Double initials? Strange details like this crop up sufficiently often to suggest that they shouldn't be ignored outright. If Hoffman is to be believed, Wanda Walkowicz, Carmen Colon et al were killed not at random, but in accordance with very precise guidelines, because their names possessed a particular value according to gematria or numerology. They were, in effect, sacrificed at the altar of a sinister elite in order to achieve specific results on the physical plane. Whether or not their deaths were efficacious is a moot point. By all rational, logical standards the idea hardly merits serious consideration. But as Stewart Holroyd remarks in *The Dictionary of Possibilities*: "The fact that (ritual magic) survived at all through a long period when its devotees risked terrifying punishments is surely evidence that *it must have been found effective*." A disquieting thought indeed — especially in the light of Hoffman's more bizarre hypotheses.

It is almost impossible to condense so vast and obscure a theory into a few pages and still convey something of its excitement. Thus this article contains a mere outline of Hoffman's interfacial research. A more detailed version appears in the recently-published *Secrets of Masonic Mind Control*, which publishers Wiswell-Ruffin<sup>10</sup> describe as "an astonishing study of the darkest recesses of modern civilization, and the polluting, hyper-toxic cryptocracy which informs and rules it." In essence Hoffman sees Twilight Language as a kind of occult code used to imprint specific messages onto the collective unconscious. Magical orders such as the OTO figure in this scenario as scapegoats

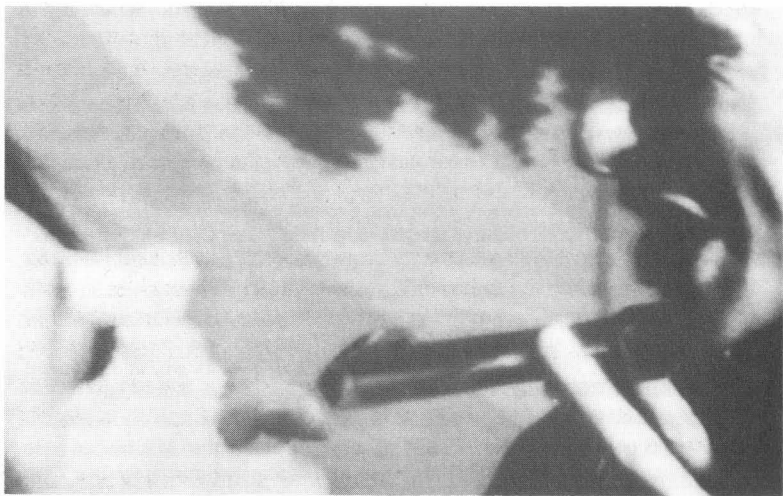
for the “cryptocracy running America,” hence the deliberate geomantic placing of murder victims at OTO sites in the Mount Palomar, Griffith Park and Devil’s Gate areas of California. “The idea of Satanists in Government,” Hoffman says, “as opposed to Satanists being hunted down by Government, is a fairly obvious one to me.”

Some readers may perceive in this paradigm a rather mundane anti- authoritarian bias. For them Hoffman has a ready answer, citing in his own defence Vallee’s *Messengers of Deception* and Bowart’s *Operation Mind Control*. The Vallee book is indeed a valuable research tool for anyone wishing to understand the finer points of contemporary mind control. A volume chilling in its implications.

Despite its surface complexity Hoffman’s work is fundamentally an attempt to pluck some meaning from the maelstrom of existence. After many years of diligent research he is still penetrating deeper and deeper into the labyrinth of modern conspiracy theory, leaving behind a thread of interpretative reasoning for others to follow. Perhaps if this thread is taken up by a sufficient number of like-minded researchers, it may eventually lead them to the Minotaur’s lair.

## Notes

- 1) From *The Psychometry of Cattle Mutilation*, (©) 1982 by Peter A. Jordan
- 2) *Fortean Times* contact address: 96 Mansfield Road, London NW3 2HX
- 3) Note also the use of the word ‘wicker’ (wicca?) in the Sam correspondence.
- 4) According to Maury Terry: “Two words appear across the top of the original Levi Symbol. They are ‘Berkial’ and ‘Amasarac’. Berkowitz’ nickname is ‘Berk’. ‘Amasarac’ written backwards — a common Satanist ploy — is Carasama — Sam Carr.” Sam Carr, the father of the alleged Satanist John Wheat Carr, was Berkowitz’ neighbour in Yonkers, NYC, during the late ’70s. Coincidence? Perhaps...
- 5) from an article in *Fortean Times* no. 32, Summer, 1980.
- 6) Note the pattern here: C is the third letter of the alphabet; M the thirteenth and W the twenty-third. Note also that whereas Wanda Walkowicz was found dead in the village of Webster, Michelle Maenza lived on Webster Crescent, and attended Rochester School 33. Carmen Colon was of course abducted on Route 33.
- 7) Interpreted according to the Qabala, 333 denotes dispersal and lack of control.
- 8) Another conspiracy-watcher, Paul Krassner, postulates that Manson and his followers were actually manipulated by US Naval Intelligence during the late ’60s.
- 9) If your name happens to be Charlie Wetzel — watch out!!
- 10) Wiswell Ruffin address: c/o PO Box 236, Dresden, NY 14441, U.S.A.



*David Bowie in Roeg's The Man Who Fell To Earth*

## Caught In The Act

### an interview with Paul Mayersberg

### Paul Buck

Though I've long been an admirer of Paul Mayersberg as a screenwriter, keeping an eye open for his credits on films, it wasn't until the publication in 1991 of his novel *Homme Fatale*, subtitled a novel of desire, that I made contact with him. Since then we've talked over lunch and over the phone, the latter mainly, being that for during the last six months Mayersberg has scarcely been at home. Initially he was off to Mongolia, rewriting sections of a six-part TV film on Genghis Khan, directed by Peter Duffell. Then he was in Toronto preparing for his latest film, *Hollywood Zen*, with Nagisa Oshima, a script written by Mayersberg from Oshima's idea. The night before this interview he had flown in from Rome where he had been finishing the second draft of a Chinese detective film set in 670AD based on a Judge Dee story. His next stop is likely to be Tokyo to discuss another project. Also, earlier in the year, there was an adaptation of a Barbara Taylor Bradford novel and a film about Marco Polo for an Israeli company. In the next few months there is work to be done on a script for a film he wants to shoot himself, and also the major pleasure of finishing his second novel.

Mayersberg is not phased by all this travel and activity. He has learnt his craft over the years and knows precisely what he is doing. Conversation with him reveals an assured manner of speaking. I understand why his best interviews in film journals like *Sight and Sound* quote extensive chunks of his conversation, an approach he employed himself in his 1967 film book, *Hollywood, the Haunted House*. This interview, conducted at his home near Chelsea football ground, was set to focus on sexual matters.

I was keen to discover how much was written in his scripts and how much created on the set of the films. I used as my opening example two sex scenes from *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, namely, the early scene of Dr Bryce (Rip Torn) with his student, and the later one of Newton (David Bowie) with Mary Lou (Candy Clark) revolving around the gun. Just as there was no pointed question, there was no



pointed answer. *The Man Who Fell to Earth* was the third project that Nic Roeg and Paul Mayersberg had worked on together, though it was the first to be produced. (The other two were an adaptation from Dlrrenmatt's *The Judge and His Hangman*, and one entitled *Miracle Jack*, from a Michael Baldwin novel.) In the process we had evolved a language together, so that for this film it's now impossible to decide whose idea was what.

However, the question led to a more interesting point about the film. When Newton, the Bowie character, arrives on Earth, he has no idea of sexuality or violence. "Those two things are not in his vocabulary. I was very keen to create a character, a hero, with no dark side at all. He, himself, is an entirely good man. The purpose of the sensuality intercut with him, as he begins to discover the world, was the idea that one day this would happen to him. So, although he has no connection with Bryce at this point, and he is alone in this world, except for this scene with Mary Lou in the hotel room, he doesn't think about sex at all. Non-sexual or asexual, Bowie was perfect in that role. But the time will come, we wanted to say, when he too will fall as it were into the sensuality of the Earth, whether he wants to or not. What happens is the tinge of violent sensuality with the Rip Torn character as it begins to filter into Newton's life on the planet. The story covers, in fact, 24 years in terms of time. So, at the end when you have the scene referred to with the gun, if you can make the connection, he has become something of what Bryce was earlier. That was intended."

Though Mayersberg had written in the script to intercut the Japanese restaurant scene with Bryce's raucous sex scene, he is adamant that the screenplay is not an important text, it is there to support the auteur theory. The text is the film, the cut film. Unlike the play, you cannot go to the screenplay and say that's what they were working from. It hasn't the same identity. A rare example of a written film that did spring to mind was Robbe-Grillet's *Last Year at Marienbad*, one of a number of references (films, books, names, images) that would echo and interlock through the afternoon like the mosaics one associates with Mayersberg's oeuvre, to use the French all-embracing term.

Continuing with his other film with Nic Roeg, *Eureka*, I pointed out that sex related closely to the core of that film with Frieda, who runs the brothel in the gold mining territory, saying to Jack McCann (Gene Hackman) that his cock and her crack are the crock of gold. Mayersberg: "The story is about a man who struggles for a large part of his life to find gold. Eventually, when he'd almost given up, he found it. Thinking that he would go on from there, he found he didn't. He found

that it was the end of life, the culmination of his search. And it is impertinent to think that once you've found what you wanted you should go any further. You want to live at that ecstatic, that high moment, you want to go on forever. Now there is clearly a connection between finding what you want in life and a sexual experience. Once you have found the one or more moments of ecstasy, one person with whom you have this ecstatic relationship, you cannot then expect to go on with a permanent orgasm for the rest of your life with everybody else you meet. And if that fails, and you go on searching, the chances are you won't find it again. She (Frieda) loved this great neer-do-well, Jack, because he was a great fuck and they had a great time together because he never found the gold. She said we have a crock of gold between us. The daughter (Theresa Russell), who is more than a chip off the old block, finds the man (Rutger Hauer) she wants. That is her gold, a flesh gold. And when she loses that at the end she will look forward to years, decades, of despair. So she has become her father in that psychic sense. That was our story."

All the time Mayersberg had been writing scripts, his aim was also to direct his own. Believing that you learnt on the set itself he worked as an assistant for Joseph Losey (*The Servant*), Roger Corman (*The Tomb of Ligeia*), Jean-Pierre Melville (*Le Doulos*), until he discovered that wasn't really the course to take. "All you learn is that a film is a complete confusion on the floor. It doesn't matter how clear it is on the page, or eventually."

For his first film he acquired the rights to a book that he later scripted for his friend Stuart Cooper to direct. It became *The Disappearance* and starred Donald Sutherland. His own films to date have been *Captive*, *Nightfall*, and *The Last Samurai*. His first, *Captive*, with Oliver Reed and Irina Brooks, ran into first-time director problems. "I could not get the actresses to agree to make the film I wanted to make. Largely because of the nudity. They simply wouldn't do it. They wouldn't accept the nudity, which is after all fairly innocent in the film. Intended to be, like children playing. *Les Enfants Terribles* (Melville's film, based on Cocteau's book) had a terrific impact on me. The idea of kids, everyone a child in a sense. It wasn't so much they talk about childhood, but that they behave like children in a playroom."

One resonance in Mayersberg's work is the exploration of father/daughter (and older men/younger women) relationships. "Because *Captive* originated with Patty Hearst, a father/daughter relationship, I wanted to see different faces. In other words to have a younger cast, early twenties, and then the outside world looking grotesquely old

in a way. The idea that Oliver Reed having been a wild kid would turn into a tyrant father. He has no respect for youth, but when you find him in bed, it's with a young Chinese girl. In other words his taste for the exotic is also in his daughter, so her being drawn in a vague way towards the Japanese is part of that."

Japanese ideas and references also recur in Mayersberg's work, aside from the obvious, working with the Japanese director Oshima on *Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence* and the current project. What interests Mayersberg about Japanese thinking? "Basically it is always the reverse of our way of thinking. I try to think, if this was a Japanese movie what would they do? To be crude about it, I use the Japanese way of thinking as a touchstone for thinking about my own true feelings as opposed to conventions, for the conventions in Japan are totally different. If you start to think about their conventions you start to question your own. For example, sexually. Voyeurism is a traditional Japanese, almost sensual, art form. Voyeurism is not regarded as a secret, perverse activity. Absolutely central to the Japanese experience of sexuality is watching other people, and hearing other people, because of the thinness of their walls. That's deliberate, it isn't some form of mistake, it's part of a culture. We think of it as something you've got to be bent to feel any affinity for."

Voyeurism is, of course, a strong and pointed feature in *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, with the unknown man at the start watching from atop the hill, with its inference that we are all being watched continually.

"Those aspects of Japanese culture that have a religious tone to them definitely appeal to the west. It doesn't have the notion of the sacred, it doesn't have transgression. Everything is natural or accepted in Japan. You can go onto the streets of Tokyo and pick up pornography that you wouldn't believe would be allowed. For kids too. Whereas if you have an ad. with a lady's bare breast it's banned immediately. They will accept wild hardcore pornography as natural fantasy and reject any form of exposure in art. There's no such thing as the nude in painting. When you see erotic drawings and woodcuts in Japan, only parts of the body are revealed. Everyone is always clothed while they are screwing. There's an accepted gap between what is permitted and what isn't. What isn't permitted is permitted as fantasy, and they are quite clear about what is fantasy and what is real life. We are very confused. We don't know the difference between fantasy and real life. Children know the difference between real pain and imagined pain. They machine gun their friends and they are lying there dead, they know it's all fantasy.

We start saying, Look, I don't think these children should really have these guns, it's not good for them. Why? Because we have failed to make the distinction. We don't rely on ourselves enough to know there is a difference. Many women have rape fantasies, that doesn't mean they want to be raped. That's an understood thing, but we're confused about that. The Japanese are not confused.

"Pauline Réage's controversial erotic novel, *The Story of O*, suddenly entered the picture. What is permitted fantasy and what is permitted physically? A bad day for women was when it was revealed that Pauline Réage was in fact a woman, because everyone had asserted with absolute confidence that it was a chap, that it's a male fantasy. It was not a male fantasy, it was a female fantasy. But the fact that no one could tell the difference led to the assumption it had to be a man. That's our confusion. The fact that you have to make that distinction in order to be happy reading something. You've got to know who wrote it and where they were coming from. You don't and it's not true. The Japanese don't care one way or the other about that. It does lead to certain repressions in Japan which are senseless... repressions of lying, for example. The Japanese lie constantly. Everything is a lie. They lie about their history, they lie to their wives, about every single thing. In *Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence* the Japanese will not believe Celliers (David Bowie) when he says who he is. It's your name. No, it's not your name, don't lie. I'm not lying. But you must be because if a Japanese was asked his name he will never give his real name. Why? Because if it got back to his family that he had allowed himself to be captured without killing himself first, he would be humiliated and then his daughter would lose her job and so forth. But that's another example of a total reverse. They lie all the time about everything. But they lie for a social reason. We might not think that's a very good one, but it's no worse than the confusion we have over what is permitted and what is not because we cannot distinguish the role of fantasy and the role of physicality in our sensual lives."

The line of thought runs into his first novel, *Homme Fatale*. If you get a fantasy you've got to see it. It's got to be real. You've got to do it. It's not good enough to see this girl, I've got to have her. And the girl thinks I want this man. But it's not true. You could have it as a fantasy tale, imagine it. I mean us to make a very firm distinction between what happened and what did not happen. Because my story is the confusion between what you imagine and what you want and how to get it. *Homme Fatale* is a story about people who try to get what they imagine. And of course it ends in that way. Had they made a distinction

from the beginning they would have lived much healthier, saner lives.

Despite Mayersberg's many years of involvement with film, he currently feels that his preoccupations cannot be wholly explored in that direction. "The stuff that I write doesn't fit easily into one genre. Now in film it has become fatal to mix genre, the so-called crossover either from genre to genre or art movie to commercial movie. I really find myself falling between all the stools in the room.

"My attempt to solve it is to take, not a genre exactly, but instead of writing straight novels, to write novels which are definitely mysteries, thrillers, suspense stories, but treat them as if what happens is straight. Once you've established yourself as a novelist people will read you because it's you. Film, of course, is quite arbitrary. No one follows directors any more. At least with a writer you'll get the next one, you will read until you don't like the writer any more."

As he says, people read for your way of looking at the world, and thus readers become fascinated by the writer rather than the book. "Everywhere you go they want to know what was your advance, how do you write, do you get up early in the morning, do you write late at night — anything except the book. The way a book then works is to express the subject matter in such a way that it becomes undeniable, which is really what Martin Amis does, which is to make the subject become style so upsetting, memorable, whatever you want to call it, that it can't be easily avoided. It's forcing or encouraging individual authors to go to extremes in writing in order to get any attention whatsoever. That on the one hand leads to blatant commercialisation, and on the other hand leads to intensely private rumination, that same impulse to go further and farther. It can either take you away from yourself into an area you believe other people want to hear about, or it can take you further into an area that you yourself want to talk about. And the fact that there's an unheard call to become a little more extreme each time can in fact lead to self-examination which can produce extremely interesting and important work."

The early influences on an artist are always intriguing. Mayersberg recounted how in his early teens he searched the library for books with sexual content. "The only two significant authors I could find were Moravia and Colette." His film diet was mainly B-movies, westerns and gangster movies. "On the one hand you had high art with sex, and on the other you had trash with mystery and violence. If you put them together as an experience, if I look back, you get a curious hybrid. And I thought that hybrid was possible in film. Hence I thought *Eureka*, for

example, was a superb example of a combination of trash and high art. Trash in what would amount to a Harold Robbins-style story of this man who made his fortune and ruined his daughter's life, or on the other hand like a family saga with lots of revenge and violence and then they kill the father. And on the other side it dealt with the occult, relationships that were ambiguous, that crossed the boundary of conventional things and so on, which made equations that no trash would consider. I thought that was what we were doing and what would actually become, I remember thinking this in 1980, this will become a form that has solved with some measure the problem of film. How to make an intelligent film with high budget, with big names, but which would satisfy the appetites for tales of violence, lust, adventure and so forth in far flung places. And what happened? Disaster. However at the back of my mind I don't think I was wrong. Ten years later, more or less, that relationship of, let's say, art and trash is a possible one in the novel, the anchor being the writer himself, not the man but the name, that will itself be identified with a certain kind of book which will have a certain kind of market. It won't be huge, *Gone with the Wind*, nor will it be *Marienbad*, but somewhere there will be a readership."

I had thought that perhaps Mayersberg had written *Homme Fatale* as a novel because he realized the sexual angle would be impossible to film, not that he was finding it impossible to explore in film terms what he wanted. "Actually it's a very difficult book to film because there's no narrative point to start at. Film people who read the book think of it as *Fatal Attraction*, or *Wild Orchids*, or one of Zalman King's things, like *Two-Moon Junction*. But in literary circles that's never been commented on. No one has seen it as belonging with that because it's seen in a totally different light. They look in terms of other novels, and it's not about a broken marriage or a marriage that's threatened. Of course I thought about *Fatal Attraction*. *Homme Fatale* would have been Glenn Close's story if she had ever got a word in edgeways about what she was doing. But she was drowned as a witch, and witches never get to speak.

"I felt in order to get the point of view of that character in the film, to have a point of view as opposed to just doing things, to have any form of *raison d'être*, apart from a vaguely demented criminal psychology, the film would have been completely unacceptable to the audience, because nobody wants to hear that, because that is the most dangerous element in the story. All you need to know is that she is basically the bad person. She is the bad side of women generally. That it would be a very unsatisfactory tale filmically if you know or under-

stood any of her personal or sexual motives. So what the film actually purports to be is a story about sexuality, but what it is really about is the sanctity of marriage masquerading as a story of sexuality that is out of control, and out of order. In a way *Homme Fatale* is the reverse of that, and to that extent it can't be a film of a popular sort because you have this terrific problem of having to identify in a popular film style with somebody you don't approve of. That doesn't happen in films. It's very hard to identify with someone you don't approve of. When it comes to Hamlet no one seems to mind that it's very hard to identify with anyone, but for some reason those laws which are applied to literary works aren't transposed to film. And that's where the novel can generate the excitement of film without you knowing or having to decide which side you are on.

"A film that I was very influenced by years ago, a film that Carol Reed made that was generally regarded as a failure, but which I thought was wonderful, was called *Trapeze*. There was a film about the disruption of things through sensuality, where it was impossible to decide which character you liked or admired, except you hated the woman because she was bad. But outside of that it was very interesting to me because it made it very difficult to choose a side. Who should she have? Who should get this girl in the end? Who deserves her? And the film had a very good, an intelligent solution. The only man who could understand and live with this woman was the older guy because he knew what he would be in for and he passed the point of needing his work anymore. As a trapeze artist who is now crippled he could devote himself to sensuality, and it wouldn't matter to him the nature of the character of the woman he was with. And the whole thing of the girl swinging between the two men was physically perfect as the oscillating relationship and the constant danger."

How had Mayersberg reacted to the idea that writing a novel is writing for the mind's eye, where the imagination of each individual reader creates their own personal screen?

"What happens is that you can read a scene which is clearly something that would have what used to be called an X-rating, but the way you perceive the scene on the screen it would never get through a censorship. So what's the censorship of film against the total non-censorship, pretty much, of books? In other words what is it? Are people who read books supposed to be so much more intelligently balanced because they can read at all, that they are not likely to be influenced, depraved and so forth by the text? Or is it something about film that is meant to appeal to a wider audience, and the more specific you get about



a relationship in order to understand it, the narrower the field of appeal is? So a sexual encounter that appeals to certain people won't appeal to others. So if you find out what the origin of a sexual relationship, of an emotional relationship is, then it starts to wear off in its appeal to a wide audience because it turns out that it's something specific, the colour of her hair, the fact that she didn't wear a bra, the guy has a big cock. Whatever it is, it's perhaps something which you wouldn't be prepared to talk to anyone about except between you and your partner. So it occurred to me that the truth is that film doesn't do well in describing emotional relationships of a sensual kind because they are always so personal and close and detailed and even fetishistic that they don't communicate on the screen. You don't like the actors so you don't want to see the film, whereas in a book you become that person. So you can become a person whom you don't like.

"Recently, for example, people are fascinated by Thomas Harris Hannibal Lecter character. Now they can't like him, but there's obviously something about the loony analyst that appeals, and people are reading for the villain whose attitudes they can't possibly understand, whose motivations and so forth can't conceivably be appealing in terms of identification. So what are they reading for? What are we reading for is a form of natural voyeurism, but the voyeurism is that you are alone when you read. You can talk about it afterwards if someone else has read the book, but at the time it's you alone and the story, however sane, mad, sick or balanced it is. When you watch a film you are watching with other people. It is already an experience of a sort that is voyeuristic. So you accept that you are looking through this window, keyhole, with a lot of other people in the room as you look. There is a community then, a sense of community which is utterly destroyed and embarrassingly so by voyeurism. Film doesn't do well with voyeurism because it's already voyeuristic. It's already voyeurism within voyeurism, a screen within a screen. It becomes too private, it's embarrassing. You shift in your seat even though you're intrigued by what you see. Books on the other hand, you can go on peering through the curtain forever. In a story you can go on fucking all night so long as you can stand it or want it. On a screen you cannot have a scene of sex that lasts very long because people get bored or irritated. Why? Because they want to go and do it themselves. Because they want to be part of it and can't because it's a film, actors. My feeling is that voyeurism as a mode of sexual encouragement doesn't work on film except as a quick flash of something. It never works so that it just stays in your mind as an image. It doesn't work as a way of thinking or living. You cannot go

on watching something on film in a way that you can in a book. So it occurred to me that the sort of scenes that were missing in films were the kind of scenes you could actually sustain intelligently in a book without being repetitious. And those are the scenes that everyone said you can put dots there, you don't need that. Scenes of explicit sex. Why if we're spending our lives in explicit sex isn't it a suitable subject? How can you go on doing it for a whole night, and it turns out it's boring. It wasn't boring when you were doing it so what makes it boring or upsetting or whatever? One reason is that it's badly written and therefore it becomes boring like a battle scene or anything else. Actually you can go on indefinitely provided it contains the same feeling, the same level of intensity of feeling that you have in your own life when you are doing it. So what I was trying to do in *Homme Fatale* was to write a book that was inordinately about sexual encounters so that the whole story was told in the sort of scenes that would be missing from films for one reason or another. And even in books for that matter. Why are they missing? Because one, they are hard to do, and two, they are not in character and reveal nothing of people's characters. And three, they don't advance the story. Supposing you could have a scene of sex which advanced the story, told you more about the character and identified and showed you they were on a dangerous course. Supposing you could do all that with sex, would it still be boring, unacceptable, pathetic, pornography, all of those things? And that is the task I set myself. Is it possible to tell a story, to present character etc., without becoming tedious over 300 odd pages, treating details of sexuality? They reveal an enormous amount of us in our lives, but why is it nothing on the page, or in film? So it seemed to me it was direct experience for most people, but totally undealt with in novels in a way."

Do you feel you took it as far as you could with *Homme Fatale*, or is there still more?

"I'm tempted to say, in a way, I'm not sure there is any more. It's only the encounter that carries the most exposure, physically, dramatically and whatever. It is the most dangerous area of ordinary life, aside from wars. The most dangerous thing you can do is get involved sexually with another person. That's the thing that is going to cause you more pain than anything else you can do in your life, I think. There's plenty of anguish, there's plenty of bad memories, but there's also the actual instant blinding pain that can only come through encounters. Call it that rather than sex relationships because of that flaring quality that they have. Most things don't flare in that way in ordinary life. You can get a job that you really enjoy, but after a bit you

are enjoying the fact that you are enjoying the job. But in the end the best fuck is the one you are having now. There's a problem. You can't live off the past in sex. You can live off the past emotionally. You can live off the past in so many ways but physically you can't. You can recreate it, you need to recreate it. You can't just have one encounter in your life and feel very happy and satisfied. But you can make one fortune and be very pleased. So clearly it's not quite the same thing. You've got to go on, once you start you've got to go on, and that is the most creative and destructive and damning thing in life. This kind of encounter has to have a sequel even if it isn't with that person. All sex is serial. And the same rules apply to sensual encounters of one type or another as they do to crime. And that's the close connection. Once you do it and get away with it and enjoy it, you want to do it again until you get caught or stopped. There is a very straight connection between sex and crime in that way."

Mayersberg sees Georges Bataille as an important writer, but he's always sidelined in my life. When he writes about Kafka I'm enthralled, but when he begins to talk about De Sade I've got problems because I don't share the Catholicism that underlies it.

How, in writing, without the taboos, which are either social or religious, and particularly religious, which has been the source of almost all western eroticism, how do you function as an artist in an erotic field? "This is the thing that is beginning to occupy me more and more, film aside, because western eroticism on book and magazine covers, on various things you must not do, on taboos, religious or social, largely religious, because they amounted to the same thing. When they go, and they have gone to a certain extent, what are you left with? Obviously it's not going to go away, but how do you express it? Either it's very personal, it becomes fetishistic or whatever, or you live a double life. But the forms for a new kind of eroticism are very tricky to work out if you are not, and I'm not, have no sense of immediate feelings of taboos. Or of the sacred in that sense. Magic perhaps, but not the sacred."

How then do you convey erotic experiences, or have they changed so totally that we don't really have a language for it? "Maybe it shouldn't be called eroticism any more. The function that the taboo had before, what would it be now in a non-religious expression of erotic iconoclasm? How can you break a code if you don't believe in it?

"Maybe its all been usurped by photography, that's possible. In other words, philosophy on the one hand, photography on the other,

have usurped an integrated erotic experience. It's possible. Gays are happy because they can still keep on doing it because there are still the inhibitions and the social pressures and so on. But straight sex, non-homosexual sex, the situation is very difficult because when you have a feeling and when you say it, it's either denied or thought to be trivial."

As is apparent, visual images are central in shaping all of Mayersberg's work, including his novels. There's a certain immediacy about films in terms of faces, clothing, general gestures and so on. That doesn't tend to be there in novels, you've got to hunt it out. With *Homme Fatale* there was a lot more about painting than is in the book, a lot more references. I don't mean quoting, but seeing things as paintings, photographs, in black and white, colour... Touches rather than the fabric. The fabric of the thing was how you remember and we are beginning to remember now.

"The effect of photography in magazines, a lot of it fashion or fashion influenced, means that people have begun to see relationships in terms of their photographs as opposed to the way they would have seen them before in terms of paintings. Moments caught, memories and so forth. What people look like with their girlfriends, with their families, off moments, caught unawares and so forth. We see ourselves that way. And we hate seeing bad pictures of ourselves. We tear them up, cross them out. Yet we must look like that from some angle at some point. If that one's true then that one must be too. Seeing ourselves in frozen moments has become quite common as a way of remembering our experience. We see things because of photographs a lot more.

And also certain kinds of painters are terrifically important. Schiele, and offshoots like Freud. But Schiele, Balthus...The way of compiling a scene in a book I draw a lot from paintings. Eric Fischel is a great influence. Lee Friedlander. His book of nudes is just fantastic. I look at it from the compressed point of view, looking at the scene and looking at it as press photographs, as coverage. And I do a lot of scenes like that. I wasn't conscious at the beginning, but it became more so when I found it worked. So you have a sense reading a scene that I've written, that it has somehow been photographed."

Another short step and we are back to films. Which others have played an important role? "*Trapeze* is very important, the whole way of thinking, physical things really. In another form Antonioni had a huge influence. *L'Avventura* and *Il Grido*. And I know he still remains. There's a big influence, you wouldn't know it to read *Homme Fatale*, but the idea that glossiness has an aesthetic as well as a selling quality

is very important, is not just for sale. Antonioni is an Italian and his films look like Ferraris. *La Notte* looks like it was built by Bertone. There's an aesthetic of slick glossiness as well as it just being selling. I never really know, even in myself whether I'm selling something to someone or whether I'm just trying to perfect it for myself. In other words I don't know whether the sex truthfully in *Homme Fatale* is designed to sell the book. Is it for the sale of the book or is it getting something in a shape that I love? So that aspect does interest me. In other words, non-adjectival description which gives you an image, is it selling or is it perfecting? Whether it sells or not, that interests me. That's what interests me in so many photographs, which is why in so many photographs you can't tell whether it's fashion or not. We see a fashion photograph and you can't tell what it's selling, the jewellery, the stockings...

"In the writing I just wanted to get it out of my system. In the reading back and paring it, revising it, I don't really care. I'm just aware of it. I was aware of it in *La Notte*. I couldn't make up my mind whether I was supposed to want to live like this or not. And on the whole I think I did. The despair would have been well worth the design of their lives. I liked the place, I loved that look, incredibly stream-lined. Desperate emotions under a stream-lined surface sounds like a cliché, but that's the price. *L'Eclisse* is another film which is just startling.

"As with Pasolini and Duras and others, those who have worked across novels and films, there's always the difference to be explored. In film I'm not looking for what would reveal itself that way. I pick up pieces of film that are missing, not what is there. And because film is all cut, and because, as Cocteau once said, what happens in film is what happens between the shots, not what's on the screen, because what happens between the shots happens in your mind, I watch films for what is missing. And maybe that's why my directed films are not particularly successful. They are based on missing things. I don't dramatize the missing thing, I leave it out. When you watch *Captive* I don't have a scene to prove she ought to have been kidnapped by people breaking in rather than her walking out. When you saw the film you didn't get that. Why not? That's a failure of mine, a failure of the film. But in the book it would not be a failure, because that scene in the book you'd understand completely.

"I've come to the conclusion, sadly, that what I want to do I can't do on film. As a director I will still direct odd films I think. There are two reasons: I don't think film is suitable for what I'm talking about, which is a major blow to me, because I've spent forty years of my life

believing in something and I no longer think it's true now. It's nothing to do with the climate of film today, becoming middle-of-the-road and so forth. I think I was on the wrong track. I don't think we can do it. That's one thing. And the other thing to be said is, if it can be done, I'm not sure I'm able. In other words, I'm not good enough to, or not clear enough, or not malleable enough, or whatever it is. So at the moment, this month anyway, my feeling is that film is a very unsuitable form for what preoccupies me now. That doesn't mean it won't appear in films I write and odd films I direct, but I don't think film is useful to me anymore in the way that it was. It doesn't give me the feeling it used to give me. For what I want to quite clearly express, film seems to be ham-fisted. And it may be that I am ham-fisted with film, despite my knowledge and experience, it doesn't necessarily make you a good director. But I think the sort of demands that film makes on the director in relation to the audience, a clarity that is not banal, is not my strong suit. So my films were better when they were ambiguous rather than when they were trying to conform to an audience expectation. My feeling today is that I can't solve it on film and I don't see anyone else solving it either. The only person I've seen whose done it is Bunuel, and that's all to do with covering things, and my instinct is to take all the things off, because I think its just as ambiguous having all the clothes off as having them all on. Because of the age he comes from, the Twenties really, and because of his Catholicism which I don't share, because of all this, which makes it so powerful, and that golden age of anarchism and so on. All of those things don't apply to me. So my form of sexual melodramas don't work like that on film, because they don't have the religion that everybody understands behind it."

No matter what Mayersberg feels about his own future in films, films will always be at the core of his writings, even as a novelist. "I have no choice, but not by the films I write, but film as a medium. The next one has characters in the film industry. One of the reasons is because I know what people do. Also, I can't stand research. I'd rather invent it, even things I don't know."

Which touches again on the film-maker/novelist Robbe-Grillet and his approach to inventing rather than research, his use of the imagination, his use of images from films and other visual aids. In *Captive* he didn't want it to be real, but people seem to think it should be. It escaped them they didn't see any trams or buses. It dawns on you after a bit that you are in another space. One could say that of *The Man Who Fell to Earth* or *Eureka*, the time and the space is very clearly the time and the space of the film, not something rooted in reality, though

how much of that is to do with the approach of Roeg or how much comes from Mayersberg's thinking is not clear.

"When I see a film or even read a book I reinvent the story for myself. I'm a very unreliable teller of the tale of the film." Of reality? "Probably. Obviously. But no one knows that unless they were there. It's not what films do, the films that I like are the ones that don't do anything. The ones where I invent the story that might have been."

And what might have been if Moravia hadn't seduced Mayersberg as a young lad. Another writer with erotic content? Or would he have taken to another course? "*The Woman of Rome*, the book, not the film. I'd never read a book that had all these men. That doesn't mean anything...others do too. But at the time I couldn't believe it. How did she do this? A huge impact. I was 11 or 12. A huge impact. An amazing change came over me and that's never left me."

The start, the seed, of a work as of any influence, is as much a key for Mayersberg as it is for this writer. "I will always start with what I think is the best scene. In other words the first scene is everything. That contains everything you need to know about the rest. But that doesn't mean there are no changes or nothing develops, but the sense of the first scene is everything to me."

Note: *Homme Fatale* in a revised edition will appear in paperback this Fall. Since the above interview Paul Mayersberg has completed the second novel, entitled *Violent Silence*. It too will appear in November. Many of the points discussed in the interview are directly relevant to the novel, as one would expect. While using the structure of a thriller, the story is a further exploration of the sexuality of a group of characters in a more extreme way than in *Homme Fatale*. The central issue upon which all hangs is one of disappearance. What happens to a person when their partner suddenly disappears? This is an issue not discussed above, though in the light of the earlier film, *The Disappearance*, it raises enough questions to become the starting point for another conversation.



## **Lobsang Rampa: Prolific and Problematical Kenneth Rayner Johnson**

A few years ago that highly imaginative, though repetitive, re-writer of Genesis, Mr Erich von Däniken, was taking part in a local radio phone-in. Amid the general chitchat, dominated largely by von Däniken's dogmatic and somewhat laboured insistence that God was an alien astronaut and that life did not naturally evolve upon earth but was seeded by extra-terrestrials, one caller phoned to state bluntly: 'Mr von Däniken, in my reckoning, you're Number Two. Lobsang Rampa is Number One.'

The caller did not elaborate, but left the listener and presumably the Swiss author, to decide to what particular league table he was referring. Number One best-selling, popular metaphysical theoriser? Or perhaps, Number One most popular purveyor of fringe-lunatic, pseudo-occult non-fiction?

It all, of course, depends on one's viewpoint. And whatever the answer to this riddle may be, there can be no doubt that as a publishing phenomenon, the self-styled Dr. T. (for Tuesday) Lobsang Rampa certainly set the pace for successors such as von Däniken.

Over a period of twenty-three years, Rampa produced no fewer than eighteen books which collectively sold in excess of three-and-a-half-million copies and gained him a world-wide following that ran into many millions more. So much so that today, some eight years after his death, second-hand copies of his books — especially hardback editions — are still in demand.

But who, precisely, was T. Lobsang Rampa? Was he, as he claimed, a fully initiated and medically qualified Tibetan lama, sent to the West to disseminate occult knowledge and wisdom?

Or was he the very clever perpetrator of one of the greatest literary impostures of all time?

To approach the answer to the question involves a fairly lengthy, complex and — often unintentionally — humorous story.

Rampa's name first came to public attention with the publication of his first, best-selling book, *The Third Eye*, by Secker & Warburg, in 1956. The book had previously been rejected by several other publishers — doubtless because of the matter-of-fact way in which it set out such amazing claims for its author's background, life and extraordinary powers. On publication, it ran into nine hardback editions and numerous paperback reprints — and sold in excess of 150,000 copies.

Right from the outset, the physical appearance of Lobsang Rampa on the London literary scene created what can only be described as confusion. When he first appeared at the Russell Street offices of the highly respected Secker & Warburg in 1955, brandishing a sample of his manuscript, Mr Frederick Warburg remembered him as being 'short, slim, with dark hair cut into a tonsure, penetrating eyes, aquiline nose — a most unusual figure.'

Yet, around the same time, BBC producer John Irwin had tea with Rampa and described him as 'portly, more than six feet tall, bald and clean shaven.' As if to make things even more confusing, a photograph of Rampa, taken around this same period, shows him bald, but sporting a full beard and a moustache.

His appearance aside, Rampa told Mr Warburg he was a Tibetan lama, had qualified as a surgeon and was living in England. To prove his medical pedigree, he produced a highly colourful diploma, purportedly issued by the University of Chungking. Mr Warburg recalled being surprised that the document was in English rather than in Chinese, but did not at the time make any comment.

In fact, before he could say anything, Rampa grabbed his hand, inspected the palm carefully, then quite accurately told him his age and the fact that he had recently been involved in an important court case, which happened to be true.

Impressed by this demonstration of Rampa's apparent ability to discover facts that were not exactly difficult to ascertain through normal channels, Mr Warburg expressed his willingness at least to read Rampa's manuscript. Before he left the office, Rampa somewhat enigmatically let it be known that he was also sometimes called 'Dr. Kuon.' (These sudden and mystifying changes of identity are a feature of Rampa's career and will crop up at least once more before his saga is complete. In fact, the 1959 Corgi paperback edition of his second book, *Doctor From Lhasa*, had its copyright attributed to C. Kuon Suo, while his third opus, *The Rampa Story*, first published in 1960, was copyright-credited to C. Kuonsuo.)

*The Third Eye* Proved both fascinating and problematical to those at Secker & Warburg who read it. Written in an easy, anecdotal style, not without some descriptive flair, it contained a string of sensational, if not unbelievable claims.

Rampa described how he had been born of noble parents on the outskirts of Lhasa, Tibet's capital. He had been selected by the royal astrologers at the age of seven to be taken from his wealthy parents, placed in a lamasery and initiated as a lama and trained as a surgeon. There were descriptions of the strange Tibetan environment, of the harsh, harrowing life of a neophyte, the tough regimen of the monastery and the difficult training required to develop psychic powers. Much of it was fairly convincing in its attention to small detail: the collection of medicinal herbs by the teachers and their acolytes; the wispy blue smoke thrown off by the ubiquitous yak-dung fires; expeditions in the Himalayas astride those shaggy-haired mountain cousins of the buffalo; the soft light of butter-lamps; descriptions of the lofty Potala, a palace of the Dalai Lama, and the layout of the town it overlooks; endless supplies of hot tea, laced with melted butter and wooden bowls of tsampa, a type of porridge made from barley which, if Rampa is to be believed, seems about all the average Tibetan monk eats.

But what raised the book to a more sensational level were accounts of such goings-on as learning to fly in man-carrying kites, confrontations with the so-called Abominable Snowman and Lobsang's almost throwaway narratives on the development of paranormal abilities: '...levitation can be accomplished and sometimes is, solely for the technical exercise involved. It is a clumsy method of moving around... the real adept uses astral travelling.'

However, what seems to have placed the manuscript in the 'over-the-top' class, is the title-chapter. According to Rampa, at the tender age of eight, he was subjected to an operation designed to open his 'third eye' — the psychic organ beloved of all mystics and said to be seated in the forehead, sometimes physically identified with the mysterious pineal gland. Rampa's account makes fairly gruesome reading. No anaesthetic was administered, the medical monks in charge merely boring into young Lobsang's forehead with a rotating, U-shaped rod of shiny steel, whose end was serrated with sharp teeth. Next, a sliver of wood that had been sterilised by herbs and a flame was inserted into the hole made by the steel rod and pushed slowly into Rampa's brain.

'Suddenly I felt a stinging, tickling sensation apparently in the bridge of my nose. It sub-

sided, and I became aware of subtle scents which I could not identify. That, too, passed away and was replaced by a feeling as if I was pushing, or being pushed, against a resilient veil. Suddenly, there was a blinding flash... For a moment, the pain was intense, like a searing white flame. It diminished, died and was replaced by spirals of colour, and globules of incandescent smoke. The metal instrument was carefully removed. The sliver of wood remained, it would stay in place for two or three weeks...'

Lobsang's personal master, the Lama Mingyar Dondup, told the boy: 'You are one of us now, Lobsang. For the rest of your life you will see people as they are and not as they pretend to be.' And, sure enough, when he looked around, Rampa could see that all the monks in attendance were surrounded by the glowing, pulsating golden flame of their personal auras. His 'third eye' was truly open!

Mr Warburg and his colleagues were highly intrigued... and perplexed. There was so much in the manuscript that was fascinating and eminently readable — yet practically impossible to verify. But it did make such a damned good yarn. It was obvious that expert advice would have to be sought.

Mr Warburg himself later explained: 'In an attempt to obtain confirmation of the Author's statements the Publishers submitted the MS to nearly twenty readers, all persons of intelligence and experience, some with special knowledge of the subject. Their opinions were so contradictory that no positive result emerged. Some questioned the accuracy of one section, some of another; what was doubted by one expert was accepted unquestioningly by another.'

Rampa was called to the publisher's office and told of the situation. He was even given the opportunity of admitting that the book was a work of fiction — and assured that it would still be published, as fiction. But he stuck to his guns; the account, he insisted, was one hundred percent true.

At the prior suggestion of one of the experts, Mr Warburg set Rampa a simple test in elementary Tibetan. He failed it lamentably. When asked to explain this gross anomaly, Rampa provided a cleverly considered but, equally unverifiable explanation. After leaving Tibet, he had fallen into the hands of the Japanese, he claimed, and had been

tortured. Rather than give out secrets about his homeland, he had exercised his psychic prowess and put a total auto-hypnotic block on his knowledge of the Tibetan language, an erasure he had, of course, since been unable to remove.

At that moment, according to Mr Warburg, Rampa was suddenly convulsed with a violent spasm and cradled his head in his hands as if in agony. Highly suspicious, Mr Warburg was at first inclined to reject the manuscript but then, on reflection upon the book's undoubted fascination, decided to go ahead and publish.

The result was almost as sensational as the book's contents.

Sales rocketed and even the normally reticent *Times Literary Supplement*, which either ignored or savaged works of dubious, speculative pedigree and pseudo-science, was moved to say: 'it comes near to being a work of art... even those who exclaim "magic, moonshine or worse" are likely to be moved by the nobility of the ethical system which produces such beliefs and such men as the author.' *The Observer*, meanwhile, another rather conservative, no-nonsense journal of some esteem, proclaimed it 'an extraordinary and exciting book, and a disquieting one.' There were some criticisms, such as that of Dr. D.L. Snellgrove, of the London University School of Oriental and African Studies, in *The Daily Telegraph*, but these were overshadowed by the paeans of praise meted out by the other quality newspapers and by the sensationalist approach of the popular Sundays.

The book went into the best-seller lists of no fewer than twelve countries and, within one year, made its author around £20,000 richer in royalties. Lobsang, meanwhile, was reputed to be busily at work on his sequel, *Doctor From Lhasa*.

Then, in 1959, a sizeable spanner was inserted in the works.

This was brought about by a private investigator from Liverpool, a Mr Clifford Burgess, who was said by the Press to have been hired by a group, vaguely described as 'a team of Tibetan scholars.'

Mr Burgess managed to unearth the fact that Rampa did not, as he claimed, hail from Tibet, but had been born in Plympton, Devon, in 1911, a place not formerly noted as an elevated spiritual centre of learning. Not only that, in this earlier life, he had answered to the decidedly non-Oriental name of Cyril Henry Hoskins. Until his father's death in 1937, far from studying the mind-elevating intricacies of Tibetan metaphysics, Burgess discovered Hoskins had been apprenticed to his Dad's plumbing business. Although Rampa's wife, Sarah, also known as Mama San Ra'ab Rampa, has said that his father was

Chief district water engineer.

In the year prior to Burgess's disclosures, Rampa's second book, *Doctor From Lhasa*, had duly appeared. In it, the author claimed he had gone to China from Tibet to train as a surgeon, taught himself to fly and been enlisted as a flying doctor in the Chinese air force. But in fact, at that time — 1938 — Burgess learned, Hoskins/Rampa was in fact studying a time-and-motion correspondence course with a company in Weybridge, Surrey, and later joined the company as a correspondence clerk.

These details were picked up by another journalist, Mr John Pitt, of the London-based weekly, *Psychic News*. Pitt visited Weybridge and managed to locate various people who had known and remembered Hoskins during his sojourn there.

A Mr Boxall, for example, told Pitt: 'He (Hoskins) told me in 1943 or 1944, that he had been a flying instructor in the Chinese air force. He said he had been badly smashed up in a plane crash when his parachute failed to open.' Mr Boxall added that, at the time, Hoskins used to limp about with the aid of a walking stick.

And a Mrs Ablett, also of Weybridge, said Hoskins was a pleasant, if odd, individual who talked of strange stories about China where he said he had been taken as a boy. He had had a keen interest in the occult, eagerly casting horoscopes for anyone who might be interested, although he was often inclined to contradict himself when recounting his past.

Finally, a Mr Sutton of East Molesey, who said he met Hoskins in 1948, had been surprised by being told that he (Hoskins) had been born in Tibet, since he looked and talked exactly like an Englishman. Around this time, Mr Sutton said, Hoskins had taken to calling himself Dr. Carl Kuon Suo.

Understandably embarrassed at the appearance of all this information, Mr Frederick Warburg issued a lengthy Press communiqué — subsequently reprinted, in part, in reissues and paperback reprints of Rampa's first book as a sort of publisher's disclaimer.

'Anyway, the Publishers asked themselves,' it read, 'was there any expert who had undergone the training of a Tibetan lama in its most developed forms? Was there one who had been brought up in a Tibetan family?' (Actually, at the time, there was a lady living in France who could have answered 'yes' to both questions.)

And, later on: 'Regarding many aspects of his personal life he has shown a reticence that was sometimes baffling; but everyone has a

right to privacy and Lobsang Rampa maintains that some concealment is imposed on him for the safety of his family in Communist-occupied Tibet... For these reasons the Author must bear — and willingly bears — a sole responsibility for the statements made in his book.'

The Press statement concluded: 'But is the truth, the whole truth, out? How could the man alleged to be Cyril Henry Hoskins, known to me as Dr. Kuon, write a book which has thrilled the world? Why did he choose this subject? How did he gain the material? From where comes his writing ability, his superb imaginative power? Did he believe his own fantasies? Was he, perhaps, the mouthpiece of a true Lama, as some have alleged? To these questions an answer must be found.'

Quite so, Mr Warburg.

## PART II: LOBSANG RAMPA WRITES AGAIN

The revelations of investigator Clifford Burgess and journalist John Pitt soon had the rest of Fleet Street on the trail of the dubious Dr. Rampa. And it was not long before national newsmen tracked him down to a villa on the cliffs, overlooking the bay at Howth, just outside Dublin.

Enquiries at the door, however, were met by a 'pretty society woman.' According to various reports, she had not only been 'recruited as a disciple' by Rampa, but in allowing herself so to be, had 'parted from her old Etonian husband.' In suitable Fleet Street tradition, she 'sobbed as she told her story.'

Meanwhile, in Kensington, the ex-Etonian 'shouted at callers' — further newsmen — who appeared on the doorstep of his luxury flat.

Back in Howth, Rampa himself was unavailable for comment, as he was 'ill, it is said, in bed.'

One journalist, however, was persistent enough, or made a sufficient nuisance of himself, to rouse the self-styled Lama from his sick-bed. He appeared suddenly at the door, bearded, shaven-headed, angry and wearing his holy man's robes — and put a curse upon the reporter. A few weeks later, the same journalist is said to have been the sole survivor of a plane crash.

It was in 1960, in his third book, *The Rampa Story*, that Lobsang/Cyril finally decided to come clean. And with all the panache he had formerly displayed in explaining why he could no longer speak Tibetan, the author ingeniously managed to clear up the reasons underlying all the rubbish that the despicable Press had been writing about him.



Yes, he admitted, those people who remembered the lowly Cyril Henry Hoskins as a correspondence course clerk in Weybridge were perfectly correct. Cyril had indeed been there, as described, living with his wife in a cottage called 'Rose Croft', at Thames Ditton. But it was also true that at this same period, the Tibetan Lama-surgeon and self-taught air ace T. Lobsang Rampa had been valiantly fighting on the side of the Chinese in the Sino-Japanese War, as described in *Doctor From Lhasa*.

The secret of this mysterious, bi-locational existence was quite easy to explain. It was simply that, at that time, there were two quite distinctly different people: Lobsang of Tibet and Cyril of Thames Ditton, late of Plympton. It was only later that, in a curious sense, they were to merge into one human entity.

After his torture at the hands of the Japanese, Lobsang explained, he managed to escape in 1945 from a prison camp just outside Hiroshima. (Where, incidentally, he was fortunate enough not only to witness, but to survive unscathed, The Bomb!) He crossed into Russia at Kraskino, to the south-west of Vladivostok. He made his way, peppered liberally with James Bond-type danger and adventure, to Moscow and, again after some hair-raising moments, managed to escape from Russia. He spent some time ferrying cars across Europe then, having acquired some mechanical expertise, managed to get his engineer's papers and sailed for the United States on an American merchant vessel. He travelled for some time in Canada, then sailed for England. At Southampton, however, his papers not being in order, he was deported back to the U.S.A. There were more minor dallies there before he finally managed to make his way back to Tibet.

And it was there, Rampa explained, that his Masters warned him that his body would not stand up to much more wear and tear. He would definitely need a new one if he were to fulfil his mission — of bringing esoteric wisdom and learning to the West. The Masters, it seems, had had their astral eyes for some time on poor old Cyril Henry Hoskins who, despite his interest in the occult and some amateurish dabbling in astral travel, had become quite disillusioned with dreary Thames Ditton, and almost suicidal. His body, the Masters advised, would be the ideal replacement vehicle for Lobsang's pre-ordained purpose and mission.

First of all, Lobsang made a preliminary astral journey to Thames Ditton, for an introductory and explanatory talk with Cyril. The latter admitted that he would welcome 'release.' And so, a month later, the amazing psychic take-over took place.

It was June 13, 1949, and the unsuspecting Cyril was up a tree, trying to photograph an owl. Suddenly, the branch on which he was resting snapped and Cyril plunged headfirst to the ground. This effectively jerked his etheric body awake on the astral plane and Hoskins found himself looking down on his unconscious physical form, attached to it only by the well-known silver cord — the psychics' umbilical. Just then, the astral form of Lobsang Rampa floated opportunely into the garden.

After a brief telepathic exchange, during which Rampa assured Hoskins that he would have a large karmic debt wiped out, in exchange for such unselfish surrender of his physical body, Lobsang deftly cut Hoskins' silver cord and looked on as his astral body floated away. (We are not told where the unfortunate ex-plumber may have been bound.) Next, Lobsang severed his own cord — in this case, presumably, stretching all the way back to Lhasa — and quickly tied a remaining small length of it to a similar portion still protruding from the prone earthly form of Hoskins. And so the amazing transfer was complete.

According to Rampa — despite his assurance to Mr Warburg about his ignorance of the Tibetan language — he had no difficulty recalling his Tibetan life, but had little, if any, knowledge of Cyril's former existence. There were a few tricky moments for him, as when he met Hoskins's wife for the first time but, all in all, he was soon able to 'acclimatise' himself to living in Cyril's physical frame and to begin writing the autobiography which brought him such fame and others such bewilderment.

*The Rampa Story*, obviously, satisfied those of Lobsang's followers who had thrown in their lot with him and were already convinced of his Tibetan training and background. It merely made those who had been sceptical from the first more entrenched in their suspicions. Nonetheless, the by-now unstoppable Lobsang promptly proceeded to write no fewer than fifteen more books — none of them ever quite matching the style and flair of the first — which were snapped up by his considerable following.

It is, perhaps, also noteworthy that after the publication of the best-selling *Third Eye*, no further books from the Rampa pen were to be published by the house of Secker & Warburg. The succeeding two appeared in hardback under the imprint of Souvenir Press and the remainder continued to appear as Corgi paperbacks. In addition, after *The Rampa Story*, the copyright line switched from C. Kuon Suo, or C. Kuonsuo, to plain T. Lobsang Rampa.

If Rampa's own accounts are to be accepted, the Press persecution did not cease with his flight from Howth, in Eire. Barely a single one of his succeeding fifteen volumes is without at least one or more passages in which he bitterly and sometimes angrily bemoans the fact that the news media will not leave him in peace. And yet, by his sixteenth title, *As It Was!* (1976), he is still complaining in the Introduction:

'...neither press, radio or publishers have EVER permitted me the opportunity of giving my side of the matter. Never! Nor have I been asked to appear on T.V. or radio and tell the Truth! Like many before me I have been persecuted for being "different" from the majority.'

Whiffs of this underlying paranoia waft out from most of Rampa's later writings.

After *The Rampa Story*, Lobsang's books became a kind of hotchpotch: semi-autobiographical, semi-anecdotal, frequently repetitive and tedious and often puerile in their attempts to summarise and purvey his 'occult knowledge.' And there is little doubt that, judging by their internal evidence alone, all of them could have been compiled without setting a foot inside the borders of the Land on the Roof of the World.

To Mr Warburg's question of 'how did he gain the material', I would submit that there is a fairly simple answer. Some three years before publication of Rampa's *Third Eye*, there appeared what became one of the Western classics of non-fiction about the self-acclaimed Lama's home country: *Seven Years In Tibet*, by Heinrich Harrer. Apart from furnishing lots of detail about Lhasa, its people, its terrain, its layout, life-style and flora and fauna, it may also be suggestive of where Rampa got his Tibetan-sounding names. For example, it may be significant that the elder brother of the 14th Dalai Lama was named none other than *Lobsang* Samten. Not only that, the 14th Dalai Lama's given name upon his birth was *Lhamo Dhondup* — the latter being a mere letter away from the supposed surname of Rampa's jolly old Master, the Lama Mingyar Dondup. Curiously enough, there is also a Mingyur Dondup — though not a lama — in Fosco Maraini's *Secret Tibet*, published in 1952 by Hutchinson.

Another likely source of Rampa's somewhat over-simplified accounts of Tibetan mysticism and paranormal abilities, are the works of that French lady to whom I alluded earlier: Madame Alexandra

David-Néel, the first European woman to become initiated as a Tibetan lama. She could certainly have answered all of Mr Warburg's questions on authenticity. Mme. David-Néel died in September, 1969, a few weeks short of her 101st birthday. Practically all of her books — see bibliography — were published in the 1930s and were available in English well before Rampa's first opus appeared.

Other possible sources from which Rampa may have culled his 'knowledge' — though in garbled form — are the various English translations, edited by the former Oxford scholar W.Y. Evans-Wentz, of his own Guru, the Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdup, including the *Bardo Thodol*, or *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. (Again see bibliography.) All of these, again, appeared long before Rampa's explosion onto the publishing scene — i.e., in the 1920s.

Had he wished, Rampa might also have perused André Guibaut's *Tibetan Venture* (1949) and Marco Pallis' *Peaks and Lamas* (1939).

However, it is fairly clear that, whatever his sources, Rampa did not pay too close attention to them. For example, when describing his own training as a monk in Lhasa, he fails to state to which of the three chief Schools — although there are more — of Buddhist philosophy he was attached. Although judging from his outlines of the sixteen steps and laws of the Middle Way, it would seem that he learned something of the Madhyamika School, known to Tibetans as the *Uma-pa* (*Dbus-ma-pa*), which had its origins in India under the teacher Nagarjuna during the second century A.D.

Certainly, the non-English words set out in his 'esoteric dictionary', published under the title of *Wisdom of the Ancients* (1965), are those more familiar to students of Hindu Yoga and Tantric systems, with occasional terms of Anglicised Chinese thrown in. (But then we must also remember Dr. Rampa's self-eradicating hypnotic process of all Tibetan language.)

In various places, Rampa alludes to the fact that he was on more than nodding acquaintance with the present Dalai Lama, who took office following the death of his predecessor in 1933. Yet one cannot help but note the total indifference to the itinerant Dr. Rampa that the Living God has displayed during his visits to the West during Lobsang's lifetime.

After spending some time at Lake Eyrie, Ontario, and a brief sojourn in Montevideo, Uruguay, Rampa finally settled in Calgary, Alberta. In his latter years he was confined to a motorised wheelchair and, finally, to bed — a paraplegic sufferer.

When not vociferously attacking the Press or, indeed, those of his correspondents who either made unreasonable demands ('come up and see me on the astral, sometime'), or failed to enclose stamped addressed envelopes for their replies, Dr. Rampa emerges as a kindly disposed, well-meaning sort of gent.

But, as I noted earlier, his writings are not without unintentional humour. For example, his explanation in *Chapters Of Life* (1978), of why UFOs do not land and make contact:

'...certain unknown flying objects... which come to this Earth actually from the world of antimatter. They cannot come to close or they would explode, but they are exploring just the same as we send a rocket to the Moon [sic]... People complain that if there were anything in this saucer business the people aboard would land or make contact with people upon this Earth. The whole truth of the matter is that they cannot, because if they touch down there is [sic] an explosion and no longer a flying saucer.'

Or how about his strange observations upon Einstein — despite his claim to be, on the whole, sympathetic to the struggles of scientists to unravel the mysteries of life and the universe:

'Einstein and people like Einstein said that the world was flat; Einstein and people like Einstein said Man would never travel faster than the speed of sound...' [sic]

One wonders how many people 'like Einstein' Dr. Rampa could count on one hand. Relatively speaking, of course...

His explanation for the real motives behind the Communist invasion of Tibet, meanwhile, might have raised a few smiles at NASA headquarters:

'A rocket launched from the flat lands of Tibet, seventeen thousand feet above sea level, would be more efficient than one launched from the lowlands. So the Communists have an incalculable advantage over the rest of the world, they have the highest and most efficient sites from which to launch rockets into space or at other countries.'

(*The Rampa Story*, 1960)

While Dr. Rampa's declared mission to the West, certainly in his early books, remained rather vague and directionless — that of transmitting Tibetan wisdom etc., — in his later work, it seems to focus its attention on a more definite, though implausible-sounding goal: that of co-operating with the scientists he was so often keen to criticise, from Einstein on down, in producing some kind of device that would enable everyone to view the human aura without any psychic ability necessary. This, he claimed, would enable the early diagnosis of many virulent and indeed otherwise fatal diseases and bring great benefit to medicine and mankind in general. He died never having apparently achieved this aim. Others, meanwhile, continue their experiments with the Kirlian technique and its variations.

In this assessment of the inarguably remarkable career of Tuesday Lobsang Rampa, it would be unfair not to mention his life-long affinity with and devotion to cats. Indeed, one of his books, *Living With The Lama* (1964), is a unique and delightful account of day-to-day life in the Rampa household, purportedly from the eyeview of Mrs Fifi Greywhiskers, one of a long line of feline companions — a story transmitted, of course, telepathically to the Lama himself and transcribed by Dr. Rampa onto a typewriter.

In addition to writing books, the Rampa cult — for such did it become over the twenty-three years of his career — also offered via the pages of various magazines, aids and accessories to those on the mystic Path. These included cassette tapes and records of the Master giving instruction in meditation; meditation figures (mandalas?); robes; Rampa special prayers; incense and incense burners, touchstones, etc., etc.

But perhaps most touching of all was the foreword to one of his lesser-known written works, a curious little volume entitled *My Visit To Venus*. The book, written in a rather kitsch, Fifties science-fiction style, involves a rather tedious visit to the second planet in our system in a flying saucer piloted by two only vaguely articulate denizens of that planet, known as The Broad One and The Tall One. The foreword, however, stipulates quite positively that any and all monies received in royalties by the author will be donated to:

Save A Cat League,  
245 West 25th Street,  
New York City.

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Also of note are two books by Rampa's wife, Mama San Ra'ab Rampa: *Pussywillow*, and *Tigerlily*

### Possible Source Material

- |                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
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| W.Y. Evans-Wentz (ed.): | The Tibetan Book of the Dead (1927)  |
| “ ” “                   | The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation   |
| “ ” “                   | Tibet's Great Yogi, Milarepa (1928)  |
| “ ” “                   | Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines (1929)   |
| Alexandra David-Néel:   | With Mystics & Magicians in Tibet (1931)<br>(Later republished as: Magic & Mystery in Tibet) |
| “ ” “                   | Initiations and Initiates in Tibet (1931)  |
| “ ” “                   | (with Lama Yongdon):<br>The Secret Oral Teachings in Tibetan<br>Buddhist Sects (1931)        |
| “ ” “                   | Buddhism: Its Doctrines & Its Methods (1939)   |
| Marco Pallis:           | Peaks and Lamas (1939)   |
| Andre Guibaut:          | Tibetan Venture (1947)   |
| Fosco Maraini:          | Secret Tibet (1952)  |

Mention might also be made in this connection of the works of Mme. H.P. Blavatsky and some of the works of Dr. Paul Brunton: *A Hermit In The Himalayas*; *A Message From Arunachala*; *The Quest of the Overself*, *The Hidden Teaching Behind Yoga*, etc., etc.



## **Nihilist Cinema — Part One: The Evil Cameraman Paul Anthony-Woods**

### **WARNING**

“This film is an EXERCISE in the CAPITALIZATION of an  
EXPLOITATION that some may find unnecessarily  
VIOLENT, SEXIST and DISGUSTING. We therefore  
suggest the viewer EXECUTE caution and discretion. Although it is  
not our sole intention to SHOCK, INSULT  
or IRRITATE, you have been warned that we are  
CATERING only to our own preference as members  
of the SEXUAL MINORITY.”  
Disclaimer of responsibility at a ‘live’  
Richard Kern film performance.

“Mere incident is nothing... it only becomes something  
when it is a symbol of an interior meaning”  
Gustave Flaubert

“Messages are for Western Union”  
Sam Goldwyn

The king of the transgressive screen is an all-American fucked-up boy. Richard Kern was born in North Carolina in 1955. By the time he was in his early twenties, he felt the classic inner twitching of the misfit. There just had to be something else out there — something other than an honest day’s hard labour, sharing an apartment with the girlfriend, good clean unexciting sex. So he packed his bags, just like the cliché goes, and headed for the big city.

In 1979, he arrived in low-rent Manhattan. In 1980, he hooked up with underground film-maker Nick Zedd, and the crowd of disparate, sometimes desperate, individuals who surrounded him —

Amos Poe, Jim Jarmusch, the 'No Wave' band Teenage Jesus & The Jerks. This small group, but in particular Zedd and Kern, were to develop what Zedd himself named the 'cinema of transgression'.

No high-falutin' theories applied as to cinematic technique — even less, any artistic concept or conceit as to what the whole thing was about, God forbid. They just had an inkling that, to paraphrase Artaud, the best way to wake up your audience is to throw a bucket of guts in their faces, or something equally jolting. What to do with that audience's attention once you've shocked 'em into handing it over is, naturally, up to you. Kern decided, right from the early days assisting his mentor, Zedd, that all he wanted to do was wake those fuckers up and keep 'em awake. Pile on the relentless sex, horror, and rock 'n' roll 'til they were wired enough to overload.

It was an attitude of its time. Serious cinephiles were just about waking up to the idea that there were splatter movie makers worthy of their attention — Cronenberg, George Romero, even Tobe 'Chainsaw' Hooper in his early days. This was the stuff of Kern's dreams — fuck art, why did he need to schtup around with poetic metaphor when he could go to the very guts of everything?

It was also the immediate post-punk era, when white kids were toughening up their attitude, looking for whatever action the Age of Disillusion could offer. Kern himself had been brought up on rock 'n' roll's more decadent icons. He claims today that hearing Iggy & The Stooges and David Bowie's *Ziggy Stardust* album, for the first time, changed his life forever. Getting his act together, initially as a performance artist of the more visceral kind, he attracted the attention of Ms. Lydia Lunch, then a vocalist with Teenage Jesus. The fiercest of America's post-punk acts wanted to get famous, and get famous fast. Shock tactics were still the best, most effective methodology, but they had to go much further than the previous generation (Bowie and Iggy, and all their lured, mascara'd contemporaries).

Kern and Lydia were naturals together. An artistic (pardon the profanity) union made in Hell. What Kern gained from an alliance with the formative "noise rock" bands was a coterie of individuals who shared the same obsessions, who weren't afraid of being identified with psychosis, violence, playful nihilism, and, of course, SEX.

The idea that screwing someone could be outrageous was right out of the window by now, it pre-dated the Rolling Stones appearing on the *Ed Sullivan Show*. What the noisome lower East Siders of the early '80's meant by sex was that function you distorted and subverted

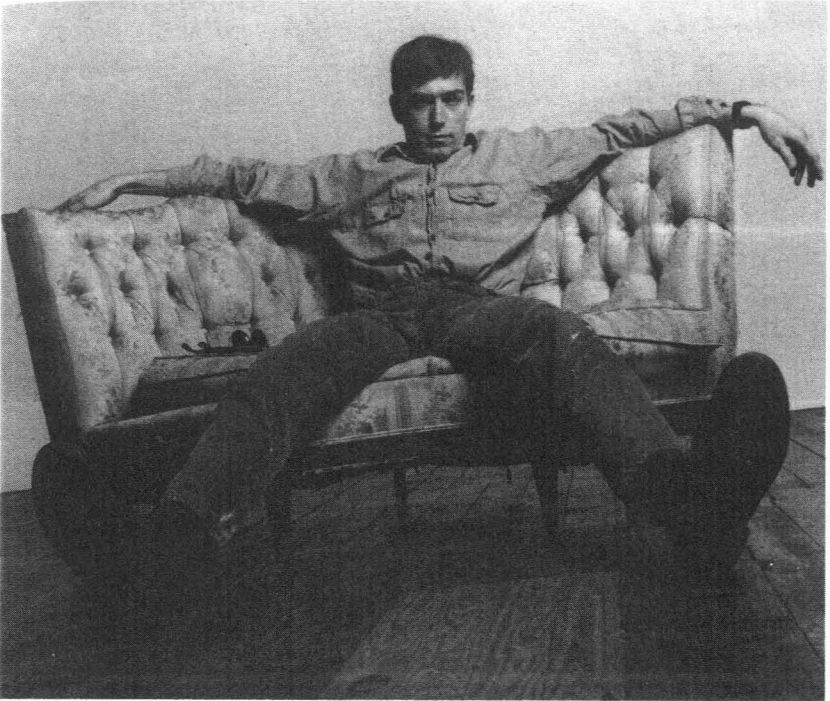
in order to gain any pleasure out of it at all. Sex — traditional, squidgy sex — was something that left many people feeling disappointed, unfulfilled, unsuccessful, and the hippie idea that promiscuity led to personal happiness had long since been sneered at by those who'd put it to the test the most. When Kern and his ensemble took sex on board, they entwined it with all the other items that bugged their lives. A desire to get even; a lust to dominate; a need to transcend their entire fucking dirty existence if only for one moment, by the extremes of pain as well as pleasure.

The equation was made: SEX = POWER = TERROR.

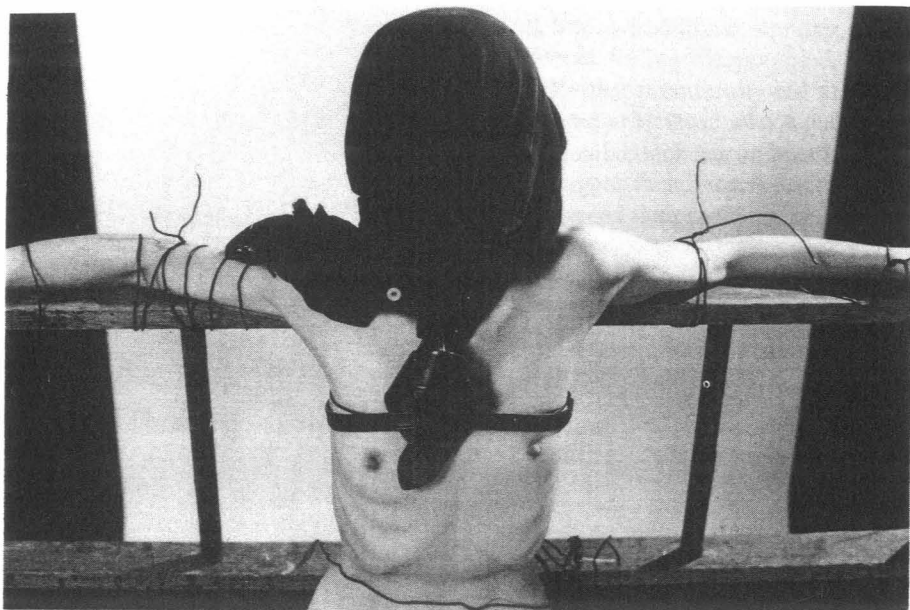
Kern spent several years making notorious short movies, on 8mm and later on video, featuring characters like Lydia Lunch, Jim Foetus (a.k.a. Clint Ruin, or whatever he was calling himself that month), Cassandra Stark (later to become a post-fem movie maker), Karen Finley (better known as a performance artist), David Wojnarowicz (a transgressive movie-maker himself, now infected with the AIDS virus and telling all in a book of memoirs), plus of course Kern and Zedd themselves. All had to submit to being victims, or perpetrators (or both), of extreme, graphic violence. All had to be shown in acts of extreme sado- masochism, mostly authentic, sometimes feigned. And they took to it with gusto.

All of Kern's short films are minimally plotted, or sometimes plotless, heavily reliant on noise-rock soundtracks for atmosphere, totally without restraint and straight in your face. The fact that they've picked up a dedicated audience who, largely speaking, are not just porn freaks, is testament to their attitude. Sure, they're totally exploitative, sure, many of them are disgusting, but there's always an inkling of a state of mind, of some malicious black humour behind the workings. Textbook feminists have decried the way women are degraded in the films, overlooking the fact that the abuse and violation of men is depicted with the same hideous degree of realism, or cartoon sadism. If the malevolent intent has to be analysed, I'd wager that the joke is on Kern himself, his friends, his cast and crew, on his entire generation. And on the audience.

By the mid-to-late '80's the movies had picked up a cult crowd and Kern was a minor name, but things were starting to fall apart. The hackneyed rock 'n' roll lifestyle, which demands gratification NOW! and stamps its feet if it can't have it, made very deep inroads into both Zedd and Kern. Zedd was to complete his blackly comic *Police State* in '87 (the tale of a user, played by Zedd himself, having to endure



*Richard Kern (Photo: Michael L  vine)*



*Jap Anne in The Evil Camerman*



*Annabelle in Kern's Nazi*

endless shit and physical abuse from brutal cops), and Kern had a gradually ascending number of bookings for his films. But both were in that jaded state that won't accept natural mood changes or cerebral stimulation, just wants its highs and lows shot up the arm. Things couldn't continue.

Kern was to bow out of film-making for nearly three years, with the sole purpose of cleaning up his act and saving his life. Zedd remains sporadically active to this day, though rumours abound as to his state of mind and body. In fact, many European magazine/fanzine writers have referred to him as "the late Nick Zedd", taking at face value the exaggerated story of his demise circulated by his former acolytes. Kern, meanwhile, was to find that moral uproar grew in proportionate terms to his relative fame:

"In 1987, I was hired to show some videos at The Ritz, a giant club, as part of a Lydia Lunch and Wiseblood show. One minute into the original version of *The Evil Cameraman*, the monitors went blank and the DJ was told to throw me out of the club by the owner. This is the biggest club in New York City, and notorious for its bouncers. I got out only steps ahead of a charging group of goons who intended, I'm sure, to wipe me out.

"In 1988, my screening at the Berlin Film Festival got shut down by the festival chairman, because the Green Party complained about a previous screening where I got on stage and told the audience to go fuck themselves in response to their jeering."

Political correctness had truly arrived by this time. And, like previous ideologies based on concepts of social justice, such as Christianity and Marxism, it would tolerate no dissent.

"Also in Berlin, six months after the festival incident, *Fingered* was playing at Eis Zeit Cinema when a group of 'radical fems' (about ten men and two women) from the group PORNO marched in, robbed the box office, threw paint on all the equipment in the projection booth and destroyed what they thought was my film. Unfortunately, the film destroyed belonged to another person.

"In Mainz, April '91, the college that booked my show tried to back out because of complaints from feminist groups (none of whom had seen the films, by the way... as is often the case in these situations, the groups involved based their activities on hearsay, or what they read about the film in some paper). We did the show anyway, and were interrupted fifteen minutes into the first movie by a large group of hooded 'anarchists' who threw blood on the screen and leaflets into the

audience. The audience, swollen to twice the normal size due to bad press, loved the performance section provided by these nazis.”

In the summer of '91, the Minneapolis Twin Cities Reader printed a column by their film reviewer, William Souder, that supplied the kind of publicity money just can't buy:

“Film in the Cities’ month-long slumming exercise, *Sleaze American Style: Classics From Cinema’s Trash Underground*, hits a profound low point tonight with a rare (and regrettable) appearance by New York Super8 film maker Richard Kern. This is the sort of viciously degrading fare — grainy, grotesque montages of sex and hideous violence ranging from casual S&M to fake snuff scenes — that gives the First Amendment a bad name... The gore is simulated, the sex gaggingly real.” (Mr. Souder apparently finds sex more nauseating than violence.) “... Series curator Joel Shepard says Mr. Kern has a ‘following’. The chance that any of these people will show up tonight may be the best reason for you not to.”

All thanks to the above, the show was sold out.

The start of the '90's saw Kern returning to film and video. Cleaned up and straightened out, his new shorts were in the same style but with a new sensibility. *The Evil Cameraman* and *The King Of Sex* are mini-sleaze epics, shot through with gleeful self parody. In answer to any fan who thought Kern was living a life of twilight glamour, he points out the absurd voyeurism of his role, and the non-aroused nature of his female cast.

In his absence, Kern's school of low-budget mania had found many converts, mostly among the nascent wave of film-makers working alongside the independent music scene. His brand of rock video, all camera pans, sharp cutting and frenetic action, has been adopted by the new wave of guitar bands (descended in style from Sonic Youth, whose recent 'biker' video, *Scooter & Jinx*, was also directed by Kern). Only here, it's a case of style over content — hardcore sex & violence won't get any would-be Nirvanas onto night-time MTV. The disturbing 'sex & death art' aspects have been adopted by the current industrial noise bands, whose sonic attacks owe much more to experimentalists like Throbbing Gristle and Einstandze Neubaten than any of Kern's contemporaries. America's Skinny Puppy and Frontline Assembly, along with Brit pioneers such as Coil and Jouisance, enhance the nightmare worlds of their music with video representations that verge on the obscure, but rarely resist the urge to throw in a shocking image and wake up the audience (Skinny Puppy, current

nabobs of the scene, have formed an occasional partnership with young horror movie maker Jim Van Bebber, much along the lines of Kern's work with Lydia Lunch, Foetus, and Sonic Youth).

Meanwhile, the cinema of transgression throws up a new name. American born/British based Richard Baylor creates short films which cross-fertilise religious iconography, psychotic violence and sexual overtones (titles include *Good Things Happen To Those Who Love The Lord*). Baylor is also straightforwardly honest about his influences. Richard Kern, nihilistic video terrorist, has helped to spawn a whole new genre of film-making.

When I spoke with Kern, he was working as a carpenter on a building site, just to survive until his next projects get off the ground. A new film with Lydia Lunch is in the pipeline (finance coming from wonderful, wonderful Copenhagen, of all places), and, after that, it's a matter of who's got the cash and the balls to take him on board. "If I had a big budget," he recently mused, "I would make an epic depicting the annihilation of youth."

## A SELECTIVE VIEW OF THE FILMS AND VIDEOS OF RICHARD KERN

*Manhattan Love Suicides* (black & white Super8mm — 1985)

*Stray Dogs* — An effete yuppie type (Wojnarowicz, the oldest of Kern's 'ensemble' players) is hassled by a thin psycho-fag, to a crashing soundtrack by Foetus. The psycho-fag follows the object of his affections back to an artist's studio, where continual rejection causes his throat to quiver and burst. Cartoon carnage, with pathos.

*Woman At The Wheel* — Juxtaposes arguments over cars between yuppies and white trash. The women from both classes endure (imagined?) rape while cruising the badlands at night, finally meeting with sudden collisions. Music by Wiseblood.

*Thrust In Me* — Co-directed and produced with Nick Zedd. Alienation, loneliness, and nihilism en extremis. Contains a straight-in-the-mouth necrophile blowjob.

*I Hate You Now* — Fantasy representation of Kern's (low)life at the time. Kern surrogate lives with blonde-maned beauty in low-rent apartment. As film opens, they're screwing. Whilst cooking fried eggs, he's revealed to be a beautiful freak with a fried-egg eye. He earns his keep by selling grass — back home, his girl turns herself into a lookalike by burning herself with a clothes iron. On his return, he goes



berserk, committing suicide with a bårbell. She immolates herself with the frying pan. Bloody sad, and fucking absurd.

*The Right Side Of My Brain* — First-person narrative by Lydia Lunch, a girl and her dreams — “He slid out of the gutter into my arms”... “I couldn’t possibly want what I thought it was I wanted”... “Somewhere between a kiss and a scream.”

She endures beating, rape, and Jim Foetus forcing her to give head. There’s a progressive S & M element to her fantasies, such as the meathooks in the lesbian scene. Kern’s most honestly inspired depiction of sexuality.

## SELECTIONS FROM THE ‘DEATH TRIP’ VIDEOS & ‘DOMINATOR’ TAPES

(all colour — super 8mm and video)

*Goodbye 42nd Street* (1984) — The camera moves around the sleazy Broadway and Times Square district. We take in the porn theatres and grindhouse cinemas (naturally). Kern appears, burning his face with a cigarette. A copulating couple indulge in a terminal strangulation match. A guy giving a blowjob gets axed through the head by his male partner. A woman sticks her man’s eye.

*You Killed Me First* (1985) — Centres round a middle-class family at lunch with their rebellious daughter (Lung Leg). Their dialogue is hilariously corny, like a camp soap opera, or one of George Kuchar’s short films (“Don’t you talk to your father like that, that’s my job!”). Daddy (David Wojnarowicz) chops up his angst-ridden daughter’s bunny for punishment, after which she spies on him butt-fucking her Nancy Reaganish mom (Karen Finley). Eventually, ‘Cassandra’ (her adopted name) kills all the family at the dinner table, including her goody-goody sister. “True story as told to Kern by his pals.”

*Submit To Me* (1985) — Starts as a cute dance ritual. The images become more intensely sado-masochistic, including a flick-knife dance by Lung Leg, a decaying junkie, a bloody mutual strangulation by two lovers, a bullet through the brain of a guy in a bondage mask, and Clint Ruin (Foetus) screaming in his own blood. SEX = POWER = TERROR. Kern: “I remembered how movies looked to me when I was fucked up on acid.”

*Death Valley '69* (1986) — Sonic Youth and Lydia Lunch take the part of a dune buggy attack battalion. The soundtrack is great — they wail their way through the song, thrash their way through the guitar

scales. Gory representations of the Tate/LaBianca murders are interspersed with scenes of madness, brutality by riot police, and a missile seeking its target. Lung Leg appears as a Susan 'Sadie May' Atkins figure.

*Fingered* (1986) — Kern's epic. Starts with Lydia giving phone sex. She meets her long-haired biker type John (name of Marty), and there's a hell of an explicit fist fuck. She follows him into his life of brutal sex and casual murder (the latter of which is pure slapstick). The dialogue is hilarious — total profanity, but very rhythmic and carefully timed, though it appears to be ad-libbed. He takes her to "meet my friends" (apparently Hicksville, Texas, though it could be upstate New York). From here, heinous events flow forth at a ridiculous rate. The sleazo rapes the pissed-off Lydia with a gun. They then pick up a girl fleeing an attempted rape — "Calm down — fucking bitch!" (sayeth Lydia). There follows the worst rape/assault scene I've witnessed on film, the whole schmeer ended abruptly by the implied arrest of the couple. *Fingered* is either the worst obscenity (outside of a snuff/paedophile come-on) committed to celluloid, or a hilarious modern day *Bonnie & Clyde* send-up. It can be both, depending on your state of mind at the time. Kern: "Many people think the scene where Marty sticks his finger up Lydia Lunch's asshole must have been exciting to make. Whereas it was just disgusting — I had to hold my nose all the time I was shooting because it stank so bloody foul." The roar of the greasepaint, the smell of the crowd.

*Nazi-a-gogo* (1987) — Starts with a chick in a Nazi fetish costume. Enter Foetus, and Lydia, sucking a switchblade... by now Kern's colour films were becoming much more sexually extreme, sailing to the far shores of self-mutilation, such as Foetus torturing himself and a guy pulling his own trachea out.

*Submit To Me Now* (1987) — Takes place at a pitch of absolute terror. The soundtrack is chaotic. The cast, composed largely of people who had been begging to appear in a Kern film, run through an escalating cycle of sexual scenarios: it begins with fever-pitch, onanistic dancing; Foetus jerks off; Lydia masturbates with a cane; a pudgy guy gives a close shave to his pubes. The movie peaks with extreme bondage scenes: a tied-up dick; a face compressed with wire 'til it bleeds; the suicide of a guy who rips out his own trachea; a young woman's dance of self-mutilation (breast, eye, cunt); the movie ends with a gut-wrenching floor crucifixion, the male victim pinned to the floor, via the torso, face and testicles. SEX = POWER = TERROR.

*The King Of Sex* (1990) — Has a great theme song (“I am the King of Sex, an’ I come from the state of Texas!”), thudding and clanging along like an exultant Birthday Party. The King himself (Nick Zedd), however, seems to have great trouble holding a hard-on, no matter how much encouragement he’s given.

*Pierce* (1990) — Title says it all. Almost. Nipple piercing. Pretty blonde Audrey Rose’s yelps of semi-pleasure soon turn to cries of pain. “Hurts, doesn’t it?” says the piercer, “...feels so fucking good when it stops!”

“Richard, they’re hurting me!” blubs Audrey.

*The Evil Cameraman* (1990) — A young oriental woman is trussed up in extreme bondage garb. Tied, restricted, hooded, belted. These fairly hardcore S & M scenes are interrupted by a comic jump of two years in the ‘narrative’. A blonde is hung upside down. A sexy brunette, a very willing participant, is bound to the wall with tape. In the original version, which Audrey Rose insisted be suppressed, she was fucked by Kern for half an hour until he walked off without climaxing. Close-ups show her looking bored shitless.

*X is Y* (1991) — The number 666 recurs endlessly on the soundtrack, as a girl plays with her machine gun. By Kern’s standards, this is far more stylish than transgressive — a sexy tribute to girls & guns, a modern media fetish.

## AN INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD KERN

When I interviewed Kern (in the autumn of ’91), I had just viewed a complete showing of his ‘Death Trip’ videos at London’s Scala cinema. In a state of mild shell-shock, I was expecting to meet a borderline psychotic, at the very least (perhaps someone pitched between the character Travis Bickle, from *Taxi Driver*, and John Waters). What I got was a relaxed, witty kinda guy. Reminding myself that I wasn’t talking to Woody Allen, I fired the following questions:

RAPID EYE: You have some pretty big egos on display in your films. Did they have to be broken, degraded at all, to make them perform like that?

KERN: “No. They were only too willing. Most of the early films were made at Lydia’s inducement. Her and Foetus would both help to gather the people needed for the film — they both wanted the notoriety. He was more than willing to do anything, and Nick Zedd, he was my best friend, a guiding light. Everyone wanted to get noticed, and everyone helped each other.”

RAPID EYE: What have you been doing since the 'Death Trip' videos were finished?

KERN: "I've been moving a lot. From 87-90 I dropped out, went to stay in California. I no longer had the same funding, so I couldn't make movies. I've been concentrating on photography instead. To finance the videos, I uh... (I don't know whether I should say this, it may get me in trouble)... anyway, I sold pot. It's not the law that bothers me, it's the tax people, the IRS. If they can't get you on one thing, they'll get you on another. They take audits, they confiscate your belongings. I just packed up and left. It was a pretty intense time for me. I was having delusions of grandeur, I was paranoid. So I went to hammer nails for a living, I just had to chill out. Now, I guess I'm more fluid again." (Laughs) "I've been working with Sonic Youth on *Scooter & Jinx*, which has made me a little money."

R.E.: Do the movies seem extreme to you now when you look back on them?

KERN: "Well, *Submit To Me Now* was one of the most extreme. The stick through the dick really freaked some people out, you know. But I did some even worse stuff that never got properly finished or shown. I think I was on the verge of collapse at that time. I was a big voyeur — someone once said to me, 'Richard, why can't you ever play an active role in my life instead of just watching?' ... At the time of *The Evil Cameraman*, I wanted to make something 'real', you know? The Jap girl at the beginning of the film was scared. I didn't tell her what was going to happen. It was an exercise in power, I guess. When I made *Nazi-A-gogo*, this girl came to my house, she was a stripper (I know lots of strippers — it's kind of a thing at the moment. A lot of girls are getting real honest about sex again, and figure 'Why shouldn't I make money out of it?' if it pays four times as much as whatever...). She offered me a mutual sexual experience without touching. I mean, can I say no?"

R.E.: Does the violence depicted in your films come from within Richard Kern, or is that something you perceive in the environment around you?

KERN: "Both. I was pretty pissed off when I made those films. I was one of those people who get angry with life, who say 'Don't do it to ME.' I guess the movies helped me, I grew out of it. But there was a lot of stuff picked up from everyday life. People react to it in different ways — when the films showed in Holland, they thought I was making it all up. People react to *Fingered* very strongly. I was expecting this really negative feminine reaction, but a whole load of women asked me

where they could find a guy like Marty! Some people come expecting the world, and are disappointed. And then, some people are really disarmed by this weird Super8 stuff.”

R.E.: How many of the cast from your films and videos have died?

KERN: “Five or six people I knew have died in the last few years, three who were in the films. One was suicide, a couple were AIDS. One girl got beaten up by a drugs dealer, and died afterwards. The guy who committed suicide had AIDS. People die from AIDS and O.D.s all the time. Everyone should have an AIDS test. I just had mine, and it came back negative.”

R.E.: So did you celebrate?

KERN: (laughs) “Sure, I went out and shot up. Seriously, the deaths bother me. Some people have just left town, and I don’t know whether they’re alive or dead. One girl, the blonde sister in *I Hate You Now*, used to have the most beautiful teeth. Now they’re all rotted, from methadone and sugar.”

R.E.: Are any of your contemporaries producing any movies, any music, whatever, that you empathise with?

KERN: “Yeah. There’s Cassandra Stark — she’s making movies down on the Lower East Side, purely from the feminine perspective. Nick Zedd has made a movie called *War Is Menstrual Envy*, it’s set in the future, where there’s no water, women are sluts, and men are fucked-up sexually. He also wrote a book called *Bleed* back in ’87, which I like a great deal. As for music, I was in a band myself in ’87, called Black Slates. I still like a lot of what we did. And there’s a friend of mine called Kimber Fowler, she’s cool. She’s in a band called Karen Black, after the actress. And I still hang out with Kim an’ Thurston (Gordon and Moore of Sonic Youth), they’re cool. But artistically, I feed more off of the strippers I know. Despite, or maybe because of, AIDS, it’s really fashionable to be sexually outrageous again, to fuck everything. The attitude is ‘If you don’t like it, you can fuck off.’”

R.E.: Are you familiar with Jorg Buttgeriet’s films? Parts of his *Nekromantik* and *Der Todesking* both seem to use *Thrust In Me* as a starting point.

KERN: “I haven’t seen any of his stuff, but I have a *Nekromantik* t-shirt a friend gave me. People always talk about influences, but I’m not too sure. Some people assume I’m greatly influenced by the Kuchar Brothers, but I’ve never seen any of their films.”

R.E.: There are some stylistic similarities (particularly regarding *I Hate You Now*), but the Kuchars’ films are much less intense, more humorous.

KERN: "Well, *Fingered* is a comedy! People who've seen it a few times go around repeating the lines a lot, and then they recognise there are all these jokes in there. There's some pretty hilarious dialogue. It wasn't ad-libbed, it was scripted and mapped out for each scene. The actors would ride around, deciding which lines should be said at which point."

R.E.: How did you initially progress from performance artist to movie maker?

KERN: "I was a performance artist in that I would pretend to stab myself, or stab someone from the audience, sure. That's how I attracted Lydia. She's always trying to get people to make films about her."

R.E.: Your films have been termed the 'cinema of transgression' by Nick Zedd. Is your work ever motivated by revenge?

KERN: "Revenge? I don't know. I did make a movie about 42nd Street once (*Goodbye 42nd Street*). This was just the stuff I saw going on all around me. It got turned down by a cinema who told me it had the 'wrong moral values'. This was supposed to be an avant-garde venue."

R.E.: I take it horror films have been a big influence?

KERN: "I read Tom Savini's make-up book around the time of *Dawn Of The Dead*. Later, I saw *The Evil Dead* for the first time, and the effects really shocked me. Now, they seem more commonplace. When I came to do *Submit To Me Now*, I did the effects in about six hours. It was kind of a cheap trick, submitting art movie lovers to horror movie effects."

R.E.: You're sometimes accused of misogyny. How do you feel about that?

KERN: "I'm still not sure what it means. After *Fingered*, I expected women to be shocked, but a lot of them just wanted to know where they could meet a guy like Marty. *Fingered* was meant to be a comedy. *The Evil Cameraman* was meant to be a joke, too..."

"All my early films were shot on Super8, just like pornographic films originally were. They were born out of my main love — walking around with a camera, trying to get people to do things."

R.E.: What's next?

KERN: "I've just been okayed on a project by the Danish Film Workshop, which I should be working on with Lydia. It's being financed by Copenhagen, all on the basis of a synopsis we gave 'em. For that, I get total artistic control."

Richard Kern, cinematic sociopath, speaks softly and relaxes back in his seat. He knows that as long as the odd maverick mind exists on an arts council, someone, somewhere, will always finance his entertaining, deeply disturbing, anti-art films.

## **Nihilist Cinema — Part Two: Buttgereit, Der Todesking Paul Anthony-Woods**

“Christianity has made of death a terror which was unknown to the  
gay calmness of the Pagan”

OUIDA

“What lives that does not live from the  
death of someone else?”

W.I. COMPTON

With the latter quote scratchily handwritten on a black caption card, the cinema screen rolled onward into one of its rare confrontations with the forbidden. A trickle of urine from a woman relieving herself told the audience the film’s makers had little regard for commercial etiquette. What followed shocked and repulsed some of the most hardened exploitation film enthusiasts, and has continued to do so for four years. Only those hypnotised by the film’s infernal poetry could bear to stay and watch.

The motorist couple we are introduced to in the opening frames exist, like so many cinematic ciphers, only to die. As the opening credits roll, their mortified forms, tangled in a car wreck, take on the fetishised ugliness of the motorway casualties in Ballard’s *CRASH*. The Teutonic theme music strikes its opening chords (low-key, to begin), as the workers of Joe’s Streetcleaning Agency come to remove the human debris. The woman has been severed directly in two — her upper trunk and torso like a bloodstained Venus De Milo. The scene is set for gothic horror of the modern kind — psycho killings, nauseating attention to detail. All such expectations are fulfilled — but in a darkly poetic, even sensitive manner, leaving no doubt that the makers’ sympathies lie with the sexually disturbed antagonist.

The ensemble team headed by young director Jorg Buttgereit (including creatively active producer Manfred O. Jelinski, co-writer Franz Rodenkirchen, and soundtrack composer/actor in the part of

Robert, 'Daktari' Lorenz) were making their first major foray into the dimension of morbid taboos.

At home, we see that the girlfriend of Robert, the repressed JSA worker, shares his necrophile tendencies (he gets over the torso) to an alarming degree. They get it on after she cuts her arms in the bath, in a mock-suicide ritual. On the soundtrack, the radio broadcasts a discussion between psychologists on overcoming phobias, including fear of dead bodies.

Buttgereit (in person, the archetypal tall, healthy, blond young Aryan) states that he and Rodenkirchen decided on the title, and, correspondingly, the theme, for *Nekromantik* because they were looking for something that "combines ugliness and romantic cliché." Not even his most disgusted detractor would argue that Buttgereit's eye isn't trained toward the paradoxical beauty inherent in scenes of mortification, and loving, obsessive murder.

In this context, the director's eye is a visionary one. He perceives living dreams among the day-to-day, like some drugless descendant of Cocteau. The major difference lies in the eye's focus — directed, unflinchingly, toward the intolerable horrors of urban psychosis.

Like all deep dreams, *Nekromantik* hinges on a visual motif. Shown once in agonised 'real' time, repeated in reversed flashback, a slaughterman cuts the throat of a shuddering rabbit, skinning it and gutting it as the life quivers forth. Naturally, these scenes are a major contention with film buffs who accuse Buttgereit of gratuitousness. The director defends this genuine cruelty as a piece of psychological symbolism:

"The guy with the rabbit is Robert's father killing the favourite pet of his son; a flashback triggered by the TV. The reverse gutting of the rabbit sequence at the end of the film illustrates that what has been destroyed is now restored; old wounds heal and bad things turn good again."

Just a minor, unpleasant, hair trigger sets the subject on a path leading to displaced gratification. To necrophilia. Like the child John Christie, locked in an airless bedroom for an interminable period to mourn over his grandfather's corpse. Like the lonely young Dennis Nilsen, lying motionless before the mirror adorned in heavy blue mascara, imagining himself dead.

Buttgereit's nascent cinematic technique is at its most effective when showing the unbearable. The slaughter of the rabbit may irk us, chew beneath our skin. Many leave the cinema at this point, during one



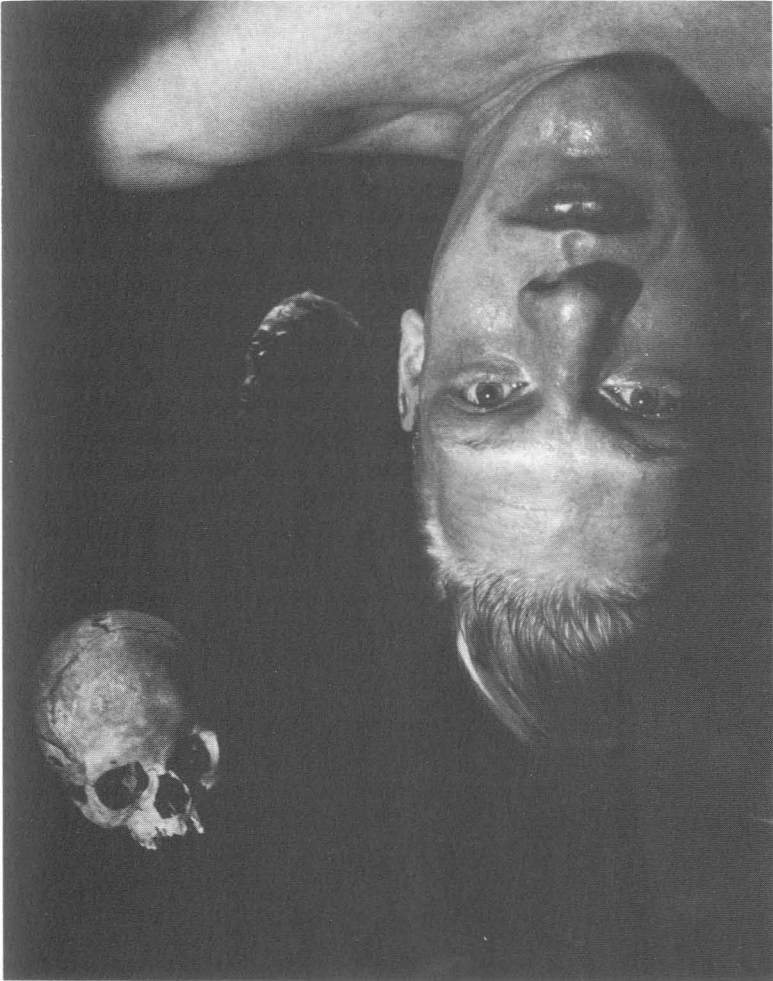
of the film's rare showings, but the young German is only guilty of showing us what's already there. The perpetrator of the act is a professional slaughterman, and would have croaked the bunny whether the camera was on him or not. The sequence merely illuminates an everyday cruelty which most of us (those of us not revolted by eating the flesh of the lower species) are complicit in. Similarly, Buttgereit's rich visual sense touches closest to beauty when it depicts repulsive ugliness. The major setpiece of the film (which, though a straightforward story, evolves as a series of dream-like episodes, rather than a conventional narrative) is the *menage a trois* between Robert, Betty (his wife), and a putrefying male corpse. It's here that the marriage between image and sound creates a diseased, balletic quality. The haunting piano theme plays, like Satie interpreted by a staccato-heavy Liberace figure. Man and wife discover their purest pleasure, with a rotten cadaver as the focus of mutual affection. In a perversely tender, soft focus love scene, the dead man's useless member is replaced by a steel rivet, the couple kissing and caressing until Robert sucks out a loose eye in a frenzy of passion. Buttgereit explains:

"It started out with us contemplating the relationship between love, sex and death. Franz (Rodenkirchen) and I talked a lot about that, and that the orgasm and the moment of death must emotionally have a lot in common."

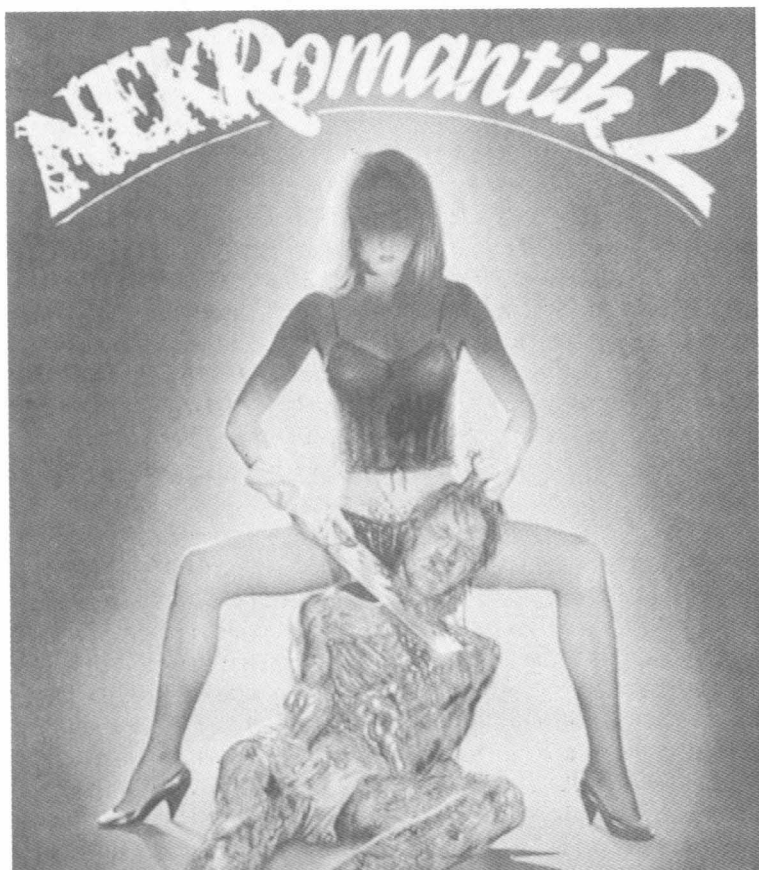
*Nekromantik* grew entirely from this concept of le Petit Mort becoming le Grand Mort, finally extinguishing the main character in his ultimate sexual ecstasy, his final catharsis. This absolute dearth of imaginative compromise led the clown prince of artless trash, John Waters, to herald *Nekromantik* as "the first erotic film for necrophiles". Of course, the appeal for most of the audience (those who can endure) is their rare (sympathetic) glance into the pathological sexual psyche, not any vicarious jollies brought about just by the mortuary looting scenes. Still, it could just be that, in an age where sex, disease and death are becoming more closely entwined than ever, death, the final taboo, is becoming sexy.

Jorg Buttgereit, now in his 30th year, made *Nekromantik* over a 14-month period concluding in late 1987. A disarmingly affable Berliner, it's almost impossible to reconcile such a positive, forceful individual with the artist whose theme remains the negation of life itself, and those who find salvation in it.

During the film-making apprenticeship of his early twenties, Buttgereit made a string of shorts such as *Hot Love* (softcore erotica),



*Jörg Buttgereit hanging around. (Photo: Uwe Arens)*



*Poster for Nekromantik 2*

*Captain Berlin* (a superhero short), and *Horror Heaven* (in which the title speaks for itself). Though sometimes verging on outrage, with scenes of tacky bad taste, his formative works give no great inkling of the obsessive morbidity which was to come.

"It was Manfred (Jelinski) who gave me the opportunity to make a feature film. Franz and I had German censorship in mind when we were writing, which gave us this kind of angry power." Censorship for the Deutschlanders, as in most other industrialised sections of the globe, remains bewilderingly inconsistent. Extremely explicit hardcore porn has been available (sometimes going to the wilder shores of S & M) for some years on videotape, whilst rarely appearing in uncensored porn on a cinema screen. Conversely, many visceral horror movies which were certificated for cinema distribution are now banned outright on video, a distorted counterpart to the irrational state of affairs in Britain. At the same time, Buttgerit was able to have *Nekromantik* distributed without a certificate, on the basis that it would be shown strictly to adults who were forewarned of its taboo-busting content. This would certainly not have been the case across the North Sea, proving at least that this particular film-maker has made the most of his (diminishing) artistic freedom.

As to the uniquely unsettling 'death aesthetic' of his films, Buttgerit explains his abiding obsession thus:

"Franz and I are both very attracted to true crime. I'm very interested in Edward Gein, and Albert Fish. Franz wrote his university thesis about Ted Bundy — it was about 120 sides, he studied every book about him. That is why we try to present what happens in our films as the most 'ordinary' thing. It really happens. There is no supernatural shit in our movies. These things we are showing are just around the corner. We live in a cultivated society with a lack of danger, of fear. People no longer have to trap and kill their own food, so they are trying to get hold of this feeling. In the Middle Ages, they would have attended public tortures. So I thought of this image of a girl, a guy, and a corpse — an ugly thing. Taking it a step further, you have this situation which the outside world says is perverted."

Indeed. One of the aspects many viewers find unnerving about Buttgerit's feature films is the way in which he avoids fulfilling genre expectations (he avidly denies making 'horror' films). No predictable build-ups of tension between scenes of relative calm and ghastliness, no sudden shocks or 'false alarm' jolts. The camera slowly, lovingly, follows the agonies and ecstasies of the deranged characters with the restrained passion of, say, Kurosawa filming a mighty rainstorm. The

creator himself, taboo subject matter aside, is a veritable thieving magpie of cinema. Much as parts of *Nekro* tend to resemble the more extreme work of NYC underground film-maker Richard Kern, influences and references abound throughout Buttgereit's work. "I like to watch Godzilla and read comics, but there's nothing left of that in my movies. I used to like Peter Greenaway, but I don't like his attitude — 'Look how intelligent I am'."

Robert's hallucinatory dream sequence in *Nekro*, wherein, face deformed, he walks lovingly through a field with a blonde dream girl, tossing a severed head and raw meat to each other, is like Bunuel channelled via Monty Python. It also bears witness to a strange, frequently spotted creature — the Buttgereit sense of humour, belatedly moaned by his friends as being largely absent from his first feature.

Lingering rather longer in the minds of the unconverted are the scenes of cruelty to animals — Robert flailing his tabbycat to death, relieving his tension by bathing in its guts (staged, fortunately); the video viewing session in the eventual sequel, where young women gorge pizza whilst watching seals being slaughtered and skinned (authentic, unfortunately). How can a young man of supposed artistic integrity delight in putting such barbarism on display, runs the argument.

"I'm not out to shock people, I'm out to show them," Buttgereit retorts. "There is always a small moralistic attitude attached — the movies are about self-fulfilment. Society blames these characters for what they do, but to us they are the 'good guys'. When Robert murders a hooker in a cemetery, he is fulfilling himself — death is okay for him. Someone is always getting hurt to make someone else happy. We eat, an animal has died for us..."

The epitome of such cinematic nihilism comes at the film's (rather too literal) climax. Robert is in a state of elation even though his wife has run off and left him (taking the corpse!), having committed a double murder. He nails a tin Christ to a crucifix, preparing to make the final, orgasmic sacrifice. Pushing a knife determinedly into the pit of his stomach above the pubic triangle, his (obviously fake) penis explodes in a climax of blood and sperm. Robert has finally reached for the stars, casting off this fragile existence in return for the moribund state he loves. The motif of the slaughtered rabbit runs backwards, as if the animal is being returned to life. The film ends with a shot of a stiletto heel pushing a shovel into Robert's grave. The 'electro-Beethoven' theme plays as the handwritten credits roll over shots of Betty languishing in a bathful of blood.

After *Nekromantik*, many European exploitation movie makers have had their sensibilities irrevocably changed. Some seem to be adopting a cerebral approach to a particularly disgusting or anti-social activity, simply because of the credibility awarded to Buttgereit in some quarters. Others may feel the need to compete, to transgress even further (a particularly nasty example of this is *Analstahl*, by one Ulrich Prehn, a 13-minute short taking a clumsy slapstick approach to incest, anal rape and generally nauseating behaviour, which appears on producer Jelinski's *Sex Gewalt & Gute Laune* collection. Just because it repulses, doesn't mean the director has got a damn thing to actually show you...).

As for the culprit himself: many onlookers anticipating his full-length feature (a relative turn of phrase — *Nekro* lasts a mere 67 minutes) would be unbearably vile. Some professed genuine dread of what he might do next, while others dismissed him as a sick product of the same rabid culture which produced Hegel and Himmler.

*Der Todesking* (The King of Death), completed in 1989, confounded all expectations. Unrelentingly grim, but beautifully made, it depicts seven days of suicides and sudden deaths in modern Berlin. It has none of the trappings of the horror film, but much of the sober, anti-linear approach to storytelling that characterised the early films of Bergman, or even Jean-Luc Godard (comparisons have been made between *Todesking*'s blacker-than-pitch humour and *Weekend*).

The film opens to a soundtrack of moans and synthesised strings. We're introduced to the two images of the Todesking that will pervade the film: a small girl's drawing of a skeleton with a sharp-pronged crown, and a naked male corpse which will be shown at various stages of disintegration (as Buttgereit has already tipped his hat to Greenaway, it's worth pointing out the influence *A Zed & Two Noughts* has had on this eulogy to bodily decay).

None of the characters ('case histories' might be a better definition) are identified by name, or by anything approaching a background history. They are merely depicted as abjectly miserable creatures, coming to a sad, merciful, perverse or comical end. "Just the actual death of most people is interesting to the newspapers," explains Buttgereit in pedantically correct English. "It's a strange relationship, exploitation and real life."

## MONTAG

A street in Berlin. We follow the footsteps of a handsome, 30-ish male, phoning up to resign from his job (while he rattles on in German, the subtitles minimally declare "I quit"). The camera tracks slowly around his bedroom, while electronic chamber music, reminiscent of the work of Peter Hammill, plays on. Unspecifically agitated, his gaze meets with that of his pet goldfish as he opens a tin of sardines. One last shave, then he gets in the bath to overdose. The poisoned goldfish sinks sadly to the bottom of his bowl, as his owner sinks in the bath and vomits. A loser in life, the suicide becomes the film's king of death, as it's his formerly healthy body that we see in various stages of deterioration.

## DIENTAG

A long-haired guy wanders around a video store (Berlin cult specialists Videodrome), where established classics sit alongside sleaze and a *Nekro* poster hangs in the background. "Just one video today?" asks the shop manager, who will shortly receive news of his assistant's suicide. Back at his home, both character and audience view the film he has hired — a hardcore sex 'n' violence movie exploiting the nazi era, similar to the notorious *Ilsa, She-wolf Of The S.S.* The director is credited as being one 'Jorgi Butti', one of Buttgereit's many attempts to lighten the tone ("When people laugh they are wide open, and can be hurt much more"). The 'film within a film' itself is almost intolerably savage. A captive of the S.S. has a swastika carved across his chest by a nazi ice mädchen, and is then subjected to a wince-making castration.

It's at this point that potential defenders of Buttgereit's art shy away. Is there no foul chapter of human history, no dark corner of the human condition that this man won't utilise in some way?

Remember though, that Buttgereit is a post-war baby boomer (unlike the makers of the nazi exploitationers themselves, who tend to be American, Italian or Spanish). Smearing nazi atrocities across the screen, however briefly, is akin to smearing his country's nose in its own shit — as succinct a summation of his aims as any other.

"In the first *Nekromantik*, we used to call the corpse the 'Jew-Corpse'. To us, it looked like a thin man from the concentration camps. That's so sad, I can hardly think about it. You have to remember the attitude in Germany — where we can hardly mention the nazi era, even less so refer to it in the cinema. In East Germany, people don't want Sachsenhausen concentration camp left as a memorial any more. The

public are asking for 'Einkampsbummel' — the concept of having a good time in the concentration camp. They want gift shops and cafes, just like at the supermarket."

The German people continue to be renowned for their utilitarian, functionalist states of mind. If a death camp has become a tourist site, then it must have all the trappings of a tourist site.

After the Holocaust-horror, the video viewer blowing his nagging girlfriend's brains out, picture framing the result ('splatter art') and hanging himself comes as light relief.

## MITTWOCH

Satiesque music accompanies a dark-haired girl walking in the rain. A sad little man in a cemetery tells her about his wife's tendency toward menstrual haemorrhage, every time he tries to make love to her (there is more anguished dialogue in this scene than in the whole of *Nekromantik*). As the little man's personality starts to disintegrate, the unspeaking girl points a pistol at him. It jams. She offers it to him, and he unhesitatingly blows his brains out of his head and onto a cherub statue. Buttgereit explains that he and his team wanted to steer clear of any clichés, or sexist stereotypes — "this is why I have the girl carrying the gun, because she is so sad and looks as though she might kill herself. But then there's this guy she bumps into who tells her how his wife bleeds every time they have sexual intercourse, and how he has ripped her head off in some strange way. She points the gun at him to have some kind of revenge for every woman in the world."

Before the next day comes, the camera pans slowly, panoramically, around a massive iron bridge. Its girders echo with the ghostly leaps of suicides, their names written up on screen.

"I found a list of all the people who had died jumping from that bridge, and used it in the movie. All the names have been changed though, and they conjure up these little stories, like a little girl of sixteen who had a name which means 'big one' in German. So you can imagine her committing suicide because of the names she has been called."

## DONNERSTAG

Here follows a brilliant scene of decomposition. *Der Todesking* illustrates the Buttgereit death aesthetic — phantasmagorically beautiful.



The dissolving layers of flesh seem to reveal deep, viscous pools of life, rather than the usual dry putrescence of non-existence.

"It's very important that we don't present death as akin to the funereal aesthetic — no peaceful, pale-faced corpses, the way death is usually shown in films. We have to find answers to this, and without any shit about life after death. When we are making films, I see no line between films and life."

Or indeed death. Alongside Buttgereit's many cinematic influences have to be placed the stark black and white evidence of German mortician's manuals. Albums of industrial accidents. Photographic testaments to murder — no peaceful repose in the victims, just the rigor mortised absurdity of the awkward positions they died in. Detailed records of bodily decay. The disturbing spectacle of oxygen and inner bacteria stripping the human form down to its component parts.

## **FREITAG**

A spinsterish woman, late 30-something, looks out over her apartment block. She spies a young couple making love. Her loneliness is obvious. Pathetically, she phones them to interrupt their screwing. Her sad ploy doesn't work, but directly after she receives a letter from the Brotherhood of the Seventh Day:

"God created the earth in six days," she is informed. "On the seventh day, He killed Himself." She is heartily encouraged to do likewise, as are all the recipients of the chain letter. Plunged into deeper melancholia, she reminisces about finding her parents making love when she was a child. Meanwhile, across the block, the two lovers have blown our expectations by killing themselves. They were the senders of the chain letter.

"Originally, we were going to use the Brotherhood of the Seventh Day as a promotional gimmick," confesses Buttgereit, "mailing them around Berlin before the opening of the film. We thought it was a funny thing to have such a thing in a movie about suicide."

Tight deadlines left no time for the scam. Human nature being what it so sadly is, the Brotherhood would surely have attracted a few converts around the city.

## SAMTAG

Two spectators (or voyeurs, as this is the role the audience has been so uncomfortably cast in) watch a reel of Super8 film, as opposed to 35mm, play on the screen. A mother reads her child an existential essay on 'amok murder-suicide'. A young woman is seen strapping on a camera, filming herself handling a gun. The silent film depicts her actions subjectively, from her side of the camera — she shoots dead a specky nerd, then turns the gun on a heavy metal band and their audience. Someone pulls a gun on the camera, and the film ends.

"This episode is based on several true crime incidents," elaborates Buttgereit. "Like Charles Whitman climbing on top of a building, shooting all these students and being aware of the fact that he can't get away because he's trapped himself on the roof. She's committing suicide as opposed to just killing other people. She wants to be sure that other people know about it. She wants to be recognised."

Like so many other sad cases, SHE WANTS TO TRULY EXIST FOR ONE MOMENT, even if it means killing herself (and others) to do so.

Buttgereit originally intended to have the shooting take place in a cinema showing Peter Bogdanovich's debut, *Targets*. Based on the Whitman shootings, it starred Boris Karloff as a horror movie star of bygone years (a fine swansong), faced with the contemporary horror of a sniper going berserk at a midnight drive-in. Having already used the 'film within a film within a film' idea from the *Dientag* sequence, the director dropped the idea, alluding instead to *Taxi Driver* via a photo on her apartment wall. Like the alienated misfit, Travis Bickle, the girl needs to go out in a blaze of gunfire to convince herself she is truly alive.

## SAMTAG

A thin young man wakes up. He seems to undergo either a psychotic frenzy, or cold turkey. His peculiar actions were choreographed by filming the scene backwards, then encouraging the actor to copy the reversed movements. Slowly, monotonously, painfully, he bangs his head against a wall. The walls spin, he's severely disorientated. The only sound he makes is a feeble death rattle.

"When we were talking about this sequence, we knew it would have to be at the end of the film because there is nothing more to say about it. To me, it was offensive to do the last scene without blood."

Somehow, the lack of plasmatic effects make the young man's terminal moments all the more unsettling.

At the end of the film, der Todesking's body has disintegrated completely. All that is left is the little girl's drawing, of which she says, "He makes it so that people don't want to live anymore." The credits roll over tinted photos of children (including the young Jorg Buttgereit), set to a haunting, infantile theme.

Buttgereit had by now created his own morbid milieu. Described by one admiring reviewer as the "true heir to the tradition of German expressionism", his films are haunted by the ghost shadows of Fritz Lang and F.W. Murnau, while some scenes may be haunted by the shadows of Fassbinder or Herzog in their most sombre moments. But unlike all of these luminaries, Buttgereit has never yet swerved from ever-deeper investigation into his primary obsession. Death. The young *auteur* who demonstrates such skill in illustrating his themes, the uncompromising artist who recognises his own good fortune at being able to follow his obsession, who is full of such enthusiasm for his life and work, is dedicated to depicting the loss of life.

Death ignites Buttgereit's *joie de vivre*. Maybe it's because he's self-consciously aware of his own uniqueness — his aversion to the superficial, Hollywoodean treatments of life's only certainty, be they the soft-peddalling of fatal diseases or effects-heavy splatter overkill. But bear in mind that, to the existential optimist, continual exposure to death reminds a person (a 'body') of the fleeting preciousness of one's own life.

His current notoriety owes itself to the higher media profile of his most accomplished film. *Nekromantik 2* is the movie he claimed he would never make, having apparently exhausted the subject of necrophilia with its predecessor. But, as Manfred Jelinski explains:

"I said that *Nekromantik 2* must be more romantic. Jorg said it must be more realistic. We had to make the public understand that people are perverse. And that consideration of perverse people makes you realise that 'normal' people are perverse. In the movie, you hate Monika M.'s boyfriend — he's the 'normal' one. Or you may find familiarities — all the public are perverse."

A great deal of the appeal of *Nekro 2* rests with the character played by the divine Ms. Monika M. A disturbingly sensual young woman, her perverted self assurance is dimensions apart from the tormented Robert of the first movie. The cult magazine *Headpress* described the movie as a "warm and friendly" film, while Buttgereit himself has indicated that it's his post-feminist movie, his *Thelma & Louise*. Monika's character (a nurse, perversely enough) is modelled

on Karen Greenlee, the unrepentant necrophile interviewed in Adam Parfrey's seminal anthology, *Apocalypse Culture*. Of necrophilia itself, Greenlee speaks as if it were just any other mildly naughty fetish:

"The cold, the aura of death, the smell of death, the funereal surroundings, it all contributes... a freshly embalmed corpse is something else."

This startling confidence is visible in the Monika character all the way through. Beginning with a quote by the famous philosopher 'Theodore O.' Bundy ("I want to master life and death" — a statement of dubious profundity, since Bundy went on to blame exposure to pornography for all of his heinous crimes), we find that the black-stockinged leg implanting the shovel into Robert's grave belongs to Monika M. Robert is about to become more precious in death than he ever was during his miserable life.

The resurrection of the corpse is a deliberately slow, quiet, laborious sequence. The sheer effort involved in digging a coffin from the ground is communicated painfully well. Close-ups of the passive faces of birds and lizards give the opening the air of a sedate graveyard meditation.

"Here, the corpse-fucking was not so important," Buttgerit explains. "We had already shown that. Originally, the film ran at 111 minutes" (an epic by his standards — *Der Todesking* runs 75 minutes). "We cut seven minutes out. The scene where the corpse was stolen and taken home was much longer. There were long sequences where bandages were cut, that kind of thing."

The sequence eventually melts into the image of an anonymous mackintosh man standing on the Bahnhofstrasse. This is Ms. M's 'Mister Average' as referred to by Jelinski, a modest, inoffensive little guy, similar in stature to Robert in the first film. Remembering the statement that "all the public are perverse", we find that Mr. Average is in fact a voice-over artiste for porn movies. The ecstatic groans and sighs that he delivers automatically on cue are largely absent from the sexual relationship he later enjoys with Monika. In 'real' life, he keeps his striped boxer shorts and socks on, climaxing like an asthmatic while Monika stays all but silent. Her only special request to him is that he stay as still as possible.

Before the couple get together on a computer date, we see that the extremes of Monika's passions are reserved for the moribund Robert. She makes wild, nauseating love with the slimy cadaver (so much so that she ends by vomiting), before sawing off his now

shrivelled and useless penis. This scene is all the more effective for being as anatomically correct as it is politically incorrect. Despite the relative subtlety of *Nekro 2* as compared to its predecessor, this scene has been responsible for disturbing an awful lot of minds and stomachs. As Buttgereit explains:

"A friend of Monika's, a medical student, is training to be a mortuary technician, a preparation guy. I asked him what the colour of a corpse is after three weeks in the grave." (Shiny black, if Robert's primary stages of decomposure are anything to go by) "Then I read anatomy books, books about car crash victims, and watched movies like *Autopsy* and *Faces Of Death*. We always have to overdo it — make it a cross between a real corpse and a movie corpse. If you want to get a clear image of real death — not the mainstream image — then death can't be horrible enough in a movie. *Nekro 2* we've tried to make more about the 'romance of death'. To make the audience care more about the actors. Then, if it's overdone, no-one cares."

Or perhaps, no-one cares as long as they're not a censorially-minded figure of authority. It's taken the powers-that-be a long time to realise they have a deeply disturbing artist in their midst. Even in Britain, where it would be a waste of time to submit either of the *Nekro* films for certification, *Der Todesking* has been released on video, sans castration, with an 18 certificate. Back home in Germany, the authorities were not going to let Buttgereit exercise artistic freedom forever without challenging his right to do so.

"The Munich police confiscated our film after only 12 days," explains Jelinski. "It was very strange — we received phone calls, supposedly from the public, asking about the nature of the film on show. We knew something was about to happen." (Buttgereit supplements his income by working two or three days a week as a projectionist, and heard dark rumblings along the grapevine.) "Fortunately, by the time the police raided the cinema, I had hidden the film and the negatives at the homes of some friends, people who can't be identified directly with me. Now, we are waiting to see what will happen. But there is this police chief, he understands nothing of the nature of movies, but he is out to make a name for himself."

Pushing aside the question of whether police chiefs really believe they achieve eminence by hounding misunderstood artists, Buttgereit and Jelinski now find themselves in a precarious position. At the time of writing, the court hearing is imminent, the person on trial being the cinema's projectionist thanks to a quirk of German law. Main

witness for the defence will be a professor of the humanities, who will attempt to convince the court that it may be corpse fucking, but it's still Art. Though taking place on a purely local level, the trial naturally has implications for the distribution of films throughout their homeland (particularly for the first, more extreme *Nekro*, which the authorities are turning their attention to for the first time). As Buttgereit emphasises, however, the regulations in Britain are always much more rigid. "I went to Glasgow (for a film festival), but found I couldn't even step into the cinema without a certificate for the film."

The scene where Monika decapitates the fetishised corpse, removing various organs and placing them in the fridge, caused considerable uproar amongst the moral guardians. For this section of the film, the director dredged up his darkest influences.

"The scenes with the head were inspired by the case of Ed Kemper... you know how he kept the head in the garden, which he overlooked? He liked the idea of screwing his women while 20 bodies were underneath. And also the passages with the head on the plate from *I Was Dora Suarez*, by Derek Raymond (excellent British low-life writer with a fascination for gruesome crimes). They have worked their way in."

Buttgereit also acknowledges the influence of Joel Peter-Witkin, the controversial photographic artist. Uniting their work is a similar 'death aesthetic', which finds an implicit beauty in the most morbid, dread-inspiring scenes. Such an approach finds expression at various points in the young German's films, but it's most directly viewed in some of Peter-Witkin's photo-portraits. In *The Kiss*, a man's divided head meets symmetrically, the lifeless lips touching. It's a scene of strange poignancy, made all the more affecting by the knowledge that the bearded head is that of a torture victim, borrowed from a mortuary in a Central American police state. In the same artist's deeply affecting *The Feast Of Fools*, a luxurious image of classical splendour is assembled by the arrangement of food, precious knick-knacks, stuffed animals, wine, and the angelic corpse of a young cherub, his scarred chest apparently testifying to some cruel childhood disease. Buttgereit utilised similar imagery (though no genuine corpses) in his poster for *Der Todesking*: the tall, thin director is aged by make-up, sitting majestically upon a throne with skulls at his feet, and a small child who appears to be either his son, grandson, or himself in his infancy.

But the most pervasive influence on *Nekro 2* is that of Karen Greenlee. After writing a four-and-a-half page letter confessing to

amorous episodes with between twenty-to-forty dead men, 23-year old Greenlee was sentenced to 11 days in prison, and placed under subsequent psychiatric scrutiny, for abducting the corpse of 33 year-old John Mercure. "I snuck out into a field across from where he was buried. I sat out in the field and watched them dig up the body and give him to this other mortician." Her patience and initiative paid off, rewarding her with one of the major sexual experiences of her life. "I accepted myself and realised that's just me," she claimed matter-of-factly in the *Apocalypse Culture* interview. "That's my nature and I might as well enjoy it."

The first thing Buttgereit did in order to prepare Monika for her role was to show her the Greenlee interview. Her air of (a)moral defiance is reflected in the film, Monika refusing to believe that anything which affords her such satisfaction could possibly be wrong. The intensity is slightly relieved by a humorous element, and a few gentler touches. The lover finds Robert's rotten dick in the fridge, and instinctively feels for his own. In a drunken bar-room scene, he confides to a drinking buddy, "I think she's somehow perverse."

The attractiveness of the female lead is shown off in a romantic sequence that emphasises Buttgereit's death aesthetic. The haunting *Nekro 2* theme plays on the piano (music, as ever, by John Boy Walton, Daktari Lorenz and Herman Rott), while Monika serenades the severed head like some eerie torch song chanteuse. The scene is essentially a musical stop-gap, a soothing love song transmitted from a music video channel in Hell. All action and emotion is dictated by the florid sweep of the music, much like the bulk of Buttgereit's film work thus far. As is appropriate to an artist whose tastes take in Wagner, Satie, Wim Mertens, Throbbing Gristle, Slayer and Prince, the young German understands the emotional importance of a good film score.

"The Berlin art rock scene is my 'roots'. I used to attend a club called Risiko, which was frequented by Einstandze Neubaten, Deadly Doris (performance artists featured in *NEKRO 2*), and various musicians. It was in a sleazy area called District No. 36." Buttgereit went on to explain that this was the meeting place for him and Jelinski, resulting in their first short films together. "The music is an effective way of expressing the feelings of non-actors." (None of the participants being card-carrying Equity members.) "It's also a cheap way. The music for *Nekro 1 & 2* was put together after the film, for *Der Todesking* it was created during the film. It's all original music, but for the piano theme in *NEKRO*. I told Daktari exactly what I wanted for that."

Other personalised touches include the absurd cinematic pastiches that are becoming ever more stylised. When the (living) lovers in *Nekro 2* go to the cinema, they see *Mon Dejeuner Avec Vera* (Buttgereit's satire of *My Dinner With Andre*). The film consists entirely of a naked man and woman (from *Deadly Doris*) having a conversation whilst eating eggs. "It's different from the monotony of porn flicks," enthuses Monika's nerdish boyfriend.

The humour that permeates the film is, out of necessity, of the blackest hue. The voice-over artiste is greatly disturbed when he gatecrashes the hen party and witnesses the seal slaughtering video, but has learned to live with the idea of a dead man's penis in the fridge.

"I originally wanted to film an autopsy, but I realised there was no way they were going to let an artist do this. So I went for the seal footage. I received co-operation from a documentary film-maker." And earned as distressed an outcry from many viewers as a human dissection would. But it's during this sequence that the grim essence of the film is expounded. Monika tells her shocked lover that the seal slaughter film is "less perverse than films that show dicks and cunts in close-up — that doesn't work with everybody."

As Buttgereit says, "We're trying to assume it's the normal thing to do. It's the outside world which is wrong. We're treating these things as if they're normal."

He paraphrases Karen Greenlee, when she says, "The more people tried to convince me I was crazy, the more sure of my desire I became."

Buttgereit, Rodenkirchen and Jelinski seem to envisualise a world where urban alienation nullifies the possibility of direct human relationships. Where the flesh still yearns, but the isolated spirit cries out for a partner who is no more than a malleable toy, a slave and a fantasy figure.

Dr. Richard G. Rappaport, in assessing the case of John Wayne Gacy, stated that the necrophile "tends to collect corpses as a fetishism expression of necrophilia and as a way of assuring himself (sic) of the fact that people love him... There's a need to maintain some association with these representations of a once loving animate object."

Necrophiles collect lovers who will never betray them, never bend against their will. Karen Greenlee insists that necrophilia is far more prevalent than people dare to imagine — it just goes unreported by funeral homes or mortuaries.

In *Nekromantik 2*, Monika finally achieves true ecstasy. Backed by the haunting theme music, Monika slashes the nerd's throat with a



meat cleaver, the only scene of violence against a live human being. Gradually decapitating him, she places the rotten head of Robert atop his shoulders. She killed him in a moment of passion, and his penis is still erect, offering her real satisfaction.

Thus ends a film which, with the exception of a brief, tacked-on, horror movie-type ending (whose 'twist' can be seen coming a mile off), treats the darkest reaches of morbid desire with some degree of sensitivity. Rotting corpses may be the film's essence, but they're juxtaposed with slow scenes of ferris wheel rides, and romantic walks in the park. A 'woman's picture', Jorg?

"Many women like *Nekro 2*. It's done from a woman's point of view, women are not exploited in it. I used to hate the horror films that were just done for a male audience. It's a shame about Dario Argento," (master of the Italian 'gialli' — red-blooded murder mystery — whose films are renowned solely for their elaborate set-pieces), "... his stories are so stupid, but he has optical ideas which blow your eyes off."

Jorg Buttgereit has no foreseeable plans to leave the field of deep morbidity:

"Franz Rodenkirchen will be working with me on a true crime film. I'm not comfortable with *Silence Of The Lambs*-type film. Maybe it will be the 'real' *Henry: Portrait Of A Serial Killer*. Whatever we do, I feel fortunate. In normal circumstances, my film career should have stopped with *Nekromantik*."

His films are a perverted continuation of the European culture which bred Beethoven and Nietzsche. Their themes are that serious. Their effect is that unsettling.

## H.P. Lovecraft — An Avenue

### Ian Blake

In an era when explicit 'video nasties', horror comics and novels are readily available, why should anyone bother to read the quaint, prolix horror fiction of H.P. Lovecraft? Yet people do — and in sufficiently large numbers to ensure that his books are never out of print. Lovecraft dealt almost exclusively in darkness and gloom. His aim was to capture an authentic sense of 'cosmic terror' and bottle it (so to speak) for wider consumption. This is not an especially easy task, for in the horror genre, perhaps more than in any other, success is in the mind of the individual reader. It is therefore a tribute to the peculiar intensity of Lovecraft's imagination that his work continues to be read and appreciated.

Howard Philips Lovecraft was born on 20th August, 1890, the son of Winfield Scott and Susan (Philips) Lovecraft. He spent most of his life in his native city, Providence, Rhode Island, USA, seldom venturing far afield. Chronic illness during childhood confined him to solitary pursuits, chiefly the study of literature and astronomy. So far as can be ascertained he wrote his first story, *The Little Glass Bottle*, at the age of six. A copy still exists; author Anthony Roberts was moved to describe it in *The Dark Gods* as "an appropriately mysterious tale of the sea."

During his teens Lovecraft produced numerous hand written scientific journals and published his own magazine, *The Conservative*, for the National Amateur Press Association. Short stories written during this period included *The Beast In The Cave* (1905) and *The Alchemist* (1908). A lengthy silence between 1908 and 1917 was followed by a steady increase in fantasy tales, culminating in 1922 with the publication of the series *Grewsome Tales* (better known as *Herbert West — Reanimator*) in *Home Brew*.

That was the start of it.

Lovecraft's career as a fantasy author really took off with *Dagon*, which appeared in the October 1923 issue of *Weird Tales*. Following the publication of *Dagon* Lovecraft channelled the bulk of his energy into weird fiction. His crowning achievement was the

creation of the so-called Cthulhu Mythos, a group of poems (mostly bad), short stories and novels connected by a common background of invented mythical lore. Some of these mythos-pieces have withstood the test of time remarkably well; others now seem long-winded and dull (*At The Mountains of Madness* presents a formidable endurance test for even the most ardent of Lovecraft enthusiasts). The best still exert a disturbing fascination. Among their number I would include *Pickman's Model*, *Dreams in the Witch-House*, *The Festival*, *The Dunwich Horror*, *The Haunter of the Dark* and — a personal favourite of mine — *The Hound*.

Stylistically these stories remain highly distinctive. Lovecraft had a wide vocabulary which he used extravagantly in his tales of the macabre. This tendency led Colin Wilson to remark in *The Necronomicon* that "Lovecraft lacked sensitivity to language." (Much the same view was taken by another Wilson, Edmund of that ilk, in his *Classics and Commercials*.) Anthony Roberts, on the other hand, later defended Lovecraft's excesses. Writing in *The Dark Gods* he explained that "subjects containing the essence of total realization DEMAND a rich and expressive use of language." Lovecraft's tales, he added, are remarkable for "the poetry of their highly adjectival content." (This "highly adjectival content" was parodied to perfection in Donald A. Wollheim's *The Horror Out Of Lovecraft*.) Personally, I have an intuition that Lovecraft was simply trying to impress people with his erudition. Whatever the case, his work had little 'literary merit' in the accepted sense of the term. In the '20s and '30s it often caused consternation among readers faced with archaic terms. In today's post-literate era, when reading is virtually an arcane lost art, Lovecraft's florid style demands even more concentration than ever if it is to be fully appreciated. Why, then, does it continue to strike a responsive chord in the popular imagination? What is the source of its peculiar conviction?

For a partial answer to this question it is instructive to look into Lovecraft's background. Among other things the man was a racist. A xenophobic loathing permeates his work, lending to it weight and a vituperative depth of feeling. The many references to "mongrel hordes" and "beady-eyed, rat-faced Asiatics" carry the unmistakable stamp of authenticity. Moreover Lovecraft derived a great deal of inspiration from his dreams — or, more properly, his nightmares. Thus his imagery and thematic concerns often sprang directly from the realm of the subconscious. Several scholars now contend that Lovecraft was an involuntary medium rather than a straightforward author of fiction. Anthony Roberts has drawn a parallel between Lovecraft and Mme

Blavatsky, while Kenneth Grant of the O.T.O. finds many correlations between Lovecraft's Elder Gods and the demons encountered by Aleister Crowley. Perhaps the most rigorous exponent of this theory is Anton Szandor LaVey, who has incorporated a Lovecraftian aspect into the rituals performed by his American Church of Satan (who are discussed elsewhere in this book). Thus it is evident that Lovecraft bequeathed to the world not only an impressive legacy of weird fiction, but also a body of LIVING mythology.

Next we must delve into Lovecraft's family history. Lovecraft's father died in 1898 of progressive mental decay brought on by paresis. His mother was later committed to the Butler Mental Hospital, Providence, where she died insane in 1921. Lovecraft's consequent fear of what he regarded as his 'tainted' ancestry is a recurrent feature of such tales as *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*, *The Lurking Fear*, and *The Festival*. A particularly good example is *The Rats in the Walls*, wherein the protagonist is afraid that he will be infected by the madness of his forbears.

Even more intriguing is Lovecraft's relationship with his mother, who allegedly used arsenic to whiten her skin (shades of Michael Jackson). Thus in *The Dunwich Horror* we find a "somewhat deformed, unattractive albino woman" who gives birth to an even more monstrous son. (As American enthusiast George H. Wagner once pointed out, the sire in this case is Yog-Sothoth, a primal 'father figure' who probably represents — among other things — Lovecraft's own paretic father.) This theme finds its finest expression in *Arthur Jermyn*, a story whose hero soaks himself in oil and sets fire to his clothing after discovering that he is from a white (= albino = arsenic? ) ape. The punchline, strategically placed at the beginning of the story for greater effect, is simply that "if we knew what we are, WE should do as Arthur Jermyn did." No doubt.

Then too we must consider Lovecraft's relationship with his wife Sonia, whom he met for the first time at a Boston convention of the Amateur Press Association. Although their marriage was of short duration it undoubtedly influenced the content, if not the actual course, of Lovecraft's fiction. Lovecraft always maintained that he avoided erotic subject matter on aesthetic grounds, but this may have been a rationalization. Certainly there is something highly suggestive about many of the stories written after his marriage, with their references to dark, sticky holes and women who seem "to exude a perpetual odour of fish." (Lovecraft had a 'thing' about fish smells; cf. *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*.)

Of course, there is nothing new about these theories, and their validity is open to question. It is easy to be wise after the fact, but there can be no denying that Lovecraft was, as Colin Wilson wrote in *The Strength To Dream*, "psychologically one of the most interesting men of his generation."

We may conclude, then, that Lovecraft's fiction had its origins, at least partly, in the realm of psychopathology. This fact is not important in itself. What counts is that Lovecraft was able to deploy these psychological elements in a creative fashion, so that his best stories remain fresh and original. He was, in addition, a remarkable (if rather affected) stylist with considerable descriptive prowess and an authentic feel for weird and wonderful landscapes. (If Cthulhu and the Old Ones were Lovecraft's ACTIVE agents of terror, then the passive agent was surely the Arkham/Dunwich/Miskatonic landscape in which they operated.) His plots may now seem mechanical, his grasp of character almost nonexistent, but there is a kind of black beauty about his finest stories, a richness, an opulence of mood and language, a sense of over-ripeness verging on decay. This heightened sense of atmosphere parallels the febrile intensity of the very best Victorian pornography. Its effect on susceptible readers is often just as electrifying.

This article isn't comprehensive; it doesn't pretend to be. Nor does it contain any new insights. I have merely resurrected a few old rumours about HPL, and tried to suggest a number of avenues for further research. I leave the task of carrying out this research to other, more capable hands.

## **Brain Death**

### **Colin Wilson**

On July 17, 1793, Charlotte Corday, the murderess of the French Revolutionist Marat, was guillotined in Paris. As the head fell into the basket, it was seized by the executioner's assistant Legros, who raised it in the air and gave the cheek a resounding slap. Dr Jean-Joseph Sue, of the Paris school of medicine, who was standing nearby, declared: "The face ... had no sooner received the slap than the two cheeks blushed visibly." This was also seen by the crowd, who began to shout angrily at Legros.

The guillotine, which had been invented by Dr Ignace Guillotine, had been in use for only one year. The story of Charlotte Corday renewed a controversy that had been going on for some months: whether guillotining brought instant death, or whether the brain remained alive. Some doctors maintained that the "blush" had simply been caused by Legros' blow; others asked why, in that case, both cheeks had blushed?

Seventy one years later, in June 1864, a doctor named Velpeau decided to try and resolve the question. His friend Dr Couty de la Pommerais had been condemned to death for poisoning his mistress. As Pommerais' head fell into the basket, Velpeau seized it and shouted Pommerais' name. One eye opened and looked at him, then closed again. Velpeau again shouted 'Pommerais.' This time both eyelids seemed to twitch, and opened slightly, then closed again. A moment later, Pommerais was obviously dead.

An even stranger case was described by Georges Martin, assistant to the executioner, in his memoirs, published in the early 1960s. Martin describes how an extremely violent murderer named Perigues, who had been allowed to drink a large glass of rum, attacked the executioner. He was overpowered by several men and thrust under the guillotine. The blade sliced off his head, but the body continued to thrash about, while the arms tried to free themselves from the ropes. Twenty minutes later, in the cemetery, the body was still trembling.

It could be argued, of course, that this was a reflex reaction like a knee-jerk. But if that is so, we have to suppose that the nerves stored up a large amount of energy, due to Perigueux's excitement, and that it took a long time to 'discharge'.

The problem of death obsessed doctors in both the 18th and the 19th century, for there were many cases of 'premature burial' — bodies found in contorted positions when the grave was opened — and many devices were patented to allow victims of premature burial to summon aid from the grave. There were even more cases of 'dead' patients who came back to life. Dr Antoine Louis, a friend of Guillotine, described the case of a girl whose body was 'watched over' by a monk. During the night, the monk had intercourse with the corpse.

The following morning, as she was about to be buried, the girl showed signs of life. Nine months later, she gave birth to a baby.

In the 19th century, doctors were generally agreed that death was cessation of the heartbeat. But in the 20th century, another complication was introduced when it was discovered that a 'dead' patient could sometimes be revived by heart massage, or that a patient in an Intensive Care Unit could be kept alive indefinitely on a heart-lung machine. The problem with such cases is that there are many brain cells which cannot survive loss of oxygen for more than a few seconds. And since the more primitive parts of the brain can survive oxygen loss for longer than the more modern parts, a patient who has been revived after more than three minutes may be permanently brain-damaged, surviving only as a vegetable. Yet even this was an interesting step forward, since it demonstrated that the brain can live on for several minutes after the heartbeat had ceased. The invention of EEG machines in 1934 suddenly suggested a new method of defining when death has taken place: that is, when the brain's electrical activity ceases — particularly the activity of the primitive 'brain stem'.

Even this method is not as infallible as it sounds. At the Hartebeest Snake and Animal Park, near Pretoria, in South Africa, a man named Jack Seale was bitten by a black mamba he was releasing. In the Pretoria General Hospital he was injected with snake serum, but seemed to die. Nevertheless, the surgeon — who was an old friend of Seale's — recalled that Seale had often expounded a theory about snakebite, suggesting that if a snakebite patient was kept on a heart and lung machine, he might well survive. Accordingly, Seale was connected to a heart and lung machine, and left on it for several days. Seale had recorded that he remained fully conscious, and was able to hear the

doctors discussing whether it was time to switch off the machine. An EEG machine recorded that he was dead. On the eighth day he succeeded in moving a finger, and the doctor said: 'Mr Seale, if you can hear me, raise your finger twice.' With a tremendous effort of will, he succeeded — and a week later was well enough to leave hospital.

It is, of course, possible that the brain monitor was faulty. Yet another interesting inference is also possible: that consciousness can persist in the total absence of the brain's electrical activity — which contradicts the notion we all take more-or-less for granted: that consciousness depends upon the brain, and that when the brain 'switches off', so does our human awareness. And if, of course, consciousness does not depend on the brain's electrical activity, this would also raise the crucial question whether consciousness can exist apart from the body. Scientifically speaking, we are inclined to reject the notion. Yet virtually every religion, every culture, accepts that man possesses a 'spirit' as well as a body, with the implication that the spirit can survive the death of the body.

Now this modern tendency to regard man as a kind of machine, was inaugurated in the 18th century by philosophes like La Mettrie (the author of a book called *L'Homme Machine*, or *Man the Machine*), and Condillac. Cabanis expressed their essential outlook when he remarked that 'the brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile.' And, he might have added, it radiates consciousness as a burning coal radiates heat. In other words, life is a mere by-product of matter.

Some of their younger contemporaries were horrified by the implication that man is a mere machine, and therefore has no free will and no moral responsibility; Maine de Biran and Theodore Jouffroy both insisted on what might be called 'the active power in man.' And in the mid-19th century, the philosopher William James succeeded in recovering from a severe nervous breakdown — in which he felt himself to be a mere machine — by clinging tightly to Jouffroy's proof of the existence of free will: that I can think one thing rather than another. That thought saved James' sanity, and allowed him to begin the long struggle back to health.

In the 20th century, the brain physiologist Wilder Penfield also came to reject his earlier view that thought is a mere "secretion" of the brain", and that consciousness is merely the activity of nerve cells. When conducting an experiment on the cerebral cortex — with the patient fully conscious — he discovered that the patient was experiencing a kind of mental film of his own childhood — complete with



sounds and smells — while still being fully conscious of the room around him. This meant, in effect, that two streams of consciousness were flowing simultaneously, without mingling. But if consciousness is a mere product of the neurons, the two streams ought to have mingled, like a hot and cold tap flowing into the same bowl. This seems to suggest that something is keeping them apart. In other words, if the brain is a computer, then it seems to have a programmer who stands above its 'mechanical' activities. It could be argued that Penfield had proved the existence of the soul.

Of course, that leaves the question of whether the 'programmer' is somehow independent of the brain still unanswered. But as soon as the question is stated in these simple terms, we can see that it is the basic religion question — the question that Dostoevsky said is the most important we can ask: whether man survives death.

I interrupt myself at this point to introduce a curious but relevant observation. As I was writing the above sentence, my telephone rang. It was an old friend, the writer Frank Smyth, ringing to keep in touch. And when I asked after his health, he remarked: 'I've felt much better since I died...' He went on to explain how, suffering from acute bronchitis, he was taken to hospital. Because he was hardly able to breathe, his heart was beating fast, and he was trying to slow it down by will-power. Suddenly his heart stopped. He was rushed into the surgical unit, and a tracheotomy was performed. As the air rushed into his lungs, he experienced an overwhelming sense of relief. But the doctor who had been taking his pulse told him later: 'You died for two minutes.' When he was able to sit up and do a crossword puzzle, the doctor was greatly relieved that he had not suffered brain damage. The important point here is not only that his brain continued to function even when his heart had stopped, but that — as he assured me — he continued to be fully conscious.

Now such personal experiences are generally regarded as inadmissible as scientific evidence, since there is obviously no way they can be verified in the laboratory — we have to rely on the word of the individual. But if we can accumulate enough of these observations, they begin to demand closer examination. And this is precisely what happened in the mid-1970s, when a young doctor named Raymond Moody published the result of hundreds of interviews with patients in a book called *Life after Life*. In the mid-1960s, when he was a philosophy student, Moody had come across the experience of a Virginia psychiatrist called George Ritchie who, as a young soldier, had apparently died, then revived. Ritchie describes how, in a Texas

hospital suffering from a respiratory infection, he began to spit blood and lost consciousness; when he woke up, he saw his body lying on the bed. Outside, in the corridor, a boy walked straight through him, and a man whom he tapped on the shoulder ignored him.

In the early 1970s, I also came across the tape of Ritchie describing his experiences, and was greatly impressed by it. What I should have done, I now realise, is exactly what Raymond Moody did: look around for others who had had Near Death Experiences. For I would then have made the discovery that excited Moody: that they are far more common than anyone would suppose. This is something I finally realised in 1984, on the day I was due to begin writing a book about the question of 'life after death.' On my afternoon walk, I encountered the wife of a friend, and when I mentioned that I was about to start *Afterlife* she told me of her own Near Death Experience. Suffering from a severe internal complaint (which later required a hysterectomy) she went downstairs in the middle of the night, feeling horribly ill, and felt her consciousness slipping away from her. Then she felt she was being sucked into a long tunnel with a light at the end, and experienced a sense of total and overwhelming peace. All fear of death vanished; suddenly, it seemed the most beautiful and desirable thing in the world. Reconciled to the idea of dying, she suddenly realised that her husband and son would find her dead in the chair in the morning, and decided that she had to stay alive. Then she was back in her body, with her temperature back to normal. She told me she now felt no fear of death, and that the experience had given her the courage to live as well as die. And she told me of another resident of our village who had had an almost identical experience. Since then I have heard it described dozens of times, and realise that I could have collected hundreds of such narratives by merely asking questions among friends and acquaintances. (My own mother had a similar experience.) Moody actually did it, and his book, published by a small local publisher in Atlanta, Georgia, became a national bestseller.

Unfortunately, the most important question of all is simply unanswerable. Is this world of the Near Death Experience really the world after death? Or is it merely some kind of dream — in other words, some form of brain activity? According to James Alcock, writing in *The Skeptical Enquirer*, the study of Near Death Experiences is mere 'belief in search of evidence', an expression of our collective anxiety about death. Such a view cannot be refuted scientifically — unless someone could actually prove that he had died, which is obviously impossible.

Let me, however, try to explain how I came to change my own views about this matter.

When, in the late 1960's, I was asked by an American publisher to write a book about the occult, I accepted reluctantly because my attitude was basically sceptical. It seemed to me that most of the evidence for the paranormal — for astral projection, for second sight, for precognition — was deeply suspect because it was purely anecdotal. I felt that much of the evidence for the occult is mere wishful-thinking.

The first thing that struck me as I began to research the book is that some of the most convincing evidence comes from non-believers — that is, from ordinary people who have had just one strange experience. I then went through the same learning process as the early investigators of the Society for Psychical Research, founded in 1882: the recognition that the sheer volume of evidence, presented by serious, reliable people, is so great that it simply cannot be dismissed as self-deception. When F.W.H. Myers and Edmund Gurney began to collect accounts of people who had seen close-relatives when the latter were on the point of death, they were overwhelmed with thousands of cases, so that even a carefully edited account runs to two enormous volumes (*Phantasms of the Living*).

When I wrote *The Occult* (1973) I had become totally convinced of the reality of telepathy, precognition, second sight (knowledge of things happening in other places) and poltergeist phenomena. But I took the view that all these are hidden faculties of the human mind — what Myers called the 'subliminal mind' and Freud 'the Unconscious'. I remained sceptical about the existence of spirits, and life after death. Like most modern researchers, I was convinced that poltergeist phenomena — in which the 'mischievous spirit' smashes crockery and causes objects to fly through the air — are due to the unconscious minds of disturbed adolescents, or what modern researchers like to call RSPK, recurrent spontaneous psychokinesis.

In 1981, this view was challenged when I went to Yorkshire to investigate a case in which a poltergeist had smashed almost every breakable object in the house, and made such a racket that neighbours could hear it several streets away. The phenomena had now ceased, but there were still tape-recordings, photographs and dozens of witnesses, including the two teenagers — a son and daughter — who had been in the house at the time. They described how the 'entity' behaved like a mischievous and destructive child. And the girl, Diane, described how

it had thrown her out of bed again and again, and turned the mattress upside down on her.

But it was while Diane was describing the last manifestation of the 'poltergeist' — which had dragged her upstairs by the throat, leaving bruises on her skin — that I suddenly realised that this was not her unconscious mind. It was undoubtedly a 'spirit', which was somehow obtaining its energy from Diane.

As I went on to write my book *Poltergeist*, I realised that the spirit hypothesis explains most cases far better than the spontaneous psychokinesis theory. By the time I had finished the book, I had no doubt whatever that spirits exist.

But what kind of spirits? All the evidence suggests that they are spirits of the dead, which — logically speaking — certainly seems to suggest that there is life after death.

Yet, to be honest, it was not a question in which I felt any deep interest. As a writer, I have always been far more concerned with existential questions — why are we alive, and what we are supposed to do now we are here? As to life after death, it seems illogical. After all, we accept our 'dissolution' every night when we fall asleep, so why should we not accept the idea of permanent 'sleep' after death? And although I was willing to keep an open mind, this was my own basic instinctive position before I wrote *Afterlife*.

Yet when, in 1984, I began research on that book, and settled down to studying the vast body of evidence for survival, I once again had to accept that it was overwhelming. I came to agree with William James's friend Professor Hyslop who wrote: "I regard the evidence of discarnate spirits as scientifically proved, and I no longer refer to the sceptic as having any right to speak on the subject. Any man who does not accept the existence of discarnate spirits and the proof of it is either ignorant or a moral coward. I give him short shrift, and do not propose to argue with him, on the supposition that he knows nothing about the subject."

The possibility that I might survive my own death does not bother me; I am inclined to hope that my work will live after me, and that seems enough. Yet having looked at the scientific evidence for 'communication with the dead', I have to admit that, studied in detail, it is far more convincing than I had ever supposed. The same applies to the evidence for reincarnation, as studied by an investigator like Dr Ian Stevenson, or even an intelligent journalist like Joe Fisher. I agree it sounds absurd and unlikely; yet the evidence of hundreds of case

histories is overwhelming. And, like Hyslop, I am not willing to argue with sceptics unless they can convince me that they have studied the matter as carefully as I have.

In fact, I remain, in a basic sense, indifferent to the question of survival. I am far more fascinated by the evidence of mystics, which seems to indicate that our so-called normal consciousness is actually subnormal. A writer named R.H.Ward, under the influence of nitrous oxide, described how "I passed, after the first few inhalations of the gas, directly into a state of consciousness already far more complete than the fullest degree of ordinary consciousness." In other words, our everyday awareness is an incomplete fragment of what it should be. It is "partial", as W.B.Yeats put it. Therefore the real question, the most important question, is how we could complete the partial mind.

But this in itself seems to me the most convincing argument for survival. If reality is really far 'wider' than our everyday perceptions tell us, then life after death would simply be consistent with this wider reality. There is a hidden relationship between man and the universe, and the evolution of humanity depends on the exploration of this relationship.

# **Brian Crozier, The CIA, Publishing, Covert Government And Cold War Propaganda Nick Toczek**

*Author's note:* Simon Dwyer asked me to write a piece on *Reader's Digest* and the CIA for Rapid Eye. That's not easy without a wealth of background information. So what you've got here is something much more complex. If you find it difficult to follow, stick with it. The complexity of the trail is the only reason that those involved have got away for so long with doing what they do. What you have here is a series of adapted extracts from *Murdering Democracy*, my forthcoming book on CIA and other covert operations in Britain.

## **THE CONGRESS FOR CULTURAL FREEDOM**

In June '50, before an audience of 4,000 in the Titania Palace Theatre, in the US zone of West Berlin, the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) was launched. Its declared purpose was to "defend freedom and democracy against the new tyranny sweeping the world."

Melvin Lasky was the main organiser and chairman of the CCF. An ex-Trotskyite who'd crossed to the right, Lasky had been on the staff of the US intelligence-linked journal the *New Leader* from '41-48. After the death in '61 of Sol Levitas, editor of the *New Leader*, it was revealed in the pages of the *New York Times* that the American Labour Conference, through which Levitas had run the *New Leader*, was funded by the J.M. Kaplan Fund, a CIA conduit. Lasky had subsequently worked at the US High Commission in Berlin, for whom he'd founded the successful literary magazine, *Der Monat*.

The CCF's influential financial administrator (executive director) was an official of the US military government, Michael Josselson. It later transpired that Josselson, who'd been a wartime member of OSS (which became the CIA in '47) and subsequently an influential cold war propagandist in Germany, was a CIA agent. In '67, he admitted that he'd been channelling CIA money into the CCF for the 17 years of its existence. CCF funding came from the Hoblitzelle Foundation and the Fairfield Foundation. Their money came in turn from the Tower Fund,

Borden Trust, Beacon Fund, Price Fund, Heights Fund and Monroe Fund, the last of these being run by Josselson himself. All were CIA front organisations. This covert financing had reached annual levels of around \$1m., and was used to fund almost two dozen journals and a world-wide programme of political and cultural activities.

In the UK in the early to mid '50s, a powerful grouping on the right of the Labour Party became closely associated with a journal called *Socialist Commentary*. Denis Healey, a key figure in this group, who'd been first elected as a Labour MP in '52, was made London correspondent of the *New Leader* in '54.

## ENCOUNTER

In '53, the CCF launched the London-based English language monthly, *Encounter*. It shared many of its staff and writers with *Socialist Commentary* and the two magazines exchanged facilities. *Encounter's* editors were the British poet Stephen Spender and US political author Irving Kristol. Both had abandoned early far-left sympathies to become liberal anti-Communists. Kristol had previously worked on the *New Leader*. In '57, he left *Encounter* and was replaced by the CCF's Melvin Lasky. By then *Encounter* was one of the most influential political (and literary) magazines in Europe and America and throughout the West, with a circulation that reached ninety-three countries. The writer Stephen Spender was to resign when the CCF was revealed as a CIA front. Both Spender and Kristol subsequently denied any knowledge of the CIA link. Though this seems hard to believe, it is just possible. Certainly, for many years the CIA was highly successful in using its so-called conduits (front organisations) to conceal financial involvement in a host of operations. In the case of *Encounter*, the CCF money ostensibly came from the Fairfield Foundation whose president, Julius Fleischmann, had made millions dealing in yeast, gin and other commodities. Fleischmann made regular visits to London in his capacity as the magazine's 'patron'. However, former CIA executives have since claimed that not just money, but actual US and British intelligence personnel were involved editorially. Notably, in a 1967 *Saturday Evening Post* article, Tom Braden states that one of the editors of *Encounter* was a CIA agent. As head of the CIA's International Organisations Division from '50-54, Braden should know. He not only handled but personally initiated much of this work. If he's to be believed, then either Kristol or Spender were themselves CIA. In fact, according to C.M. Woodhouse, himself a veteran of British covert action work, *Encounter*

was a venture financed jointly by the CIA and Britain's own MI6. Like Braden, Woodhouse should know. He was in MI6. He was the main British representative on the board of *Encounter* when it was launched and had then just finished a stint as Anglo-American go-between in Operation Ajax, the successful joint CIA-MI6 operation to oust Mohammed Mossadeq from his post as Iranian Prime Minister. Woodhouse claimed that *Encounter* was the last in a series of joint CIA-MI6 project. This also makes sense. People at MI6 were highly indignant about some of the covert work the CIA was revealed to have been carrying out in Britain, and relationships between the two services were decidedly cooler during the late '50s and early '60s. Woodhouse became Director General of the Royal Institute for International Affairs (a.k.a. Chatham House) in '55, was a Conservative MP from '59 until '66, and later served as a member of the Trilateral Commission.

The CCF changed its name to the International Association for Cultural Freedom (IACF). Adam Watson was appointed its director in '74. He was British, with strong intelligence connections. He'd spent over thirty years in the Foreign Office (starting in '37). In the early '50s, he spent several years with a major covert British anti-Communist intelligence operation called the Information Research Department (IRD). During his IACF directorship, he was also a member of Brian Crozier's Institute for the Study of Conflict (ISC). I mention all of this partly because it adds weight to the C.M. Woodhouse allegations that up to and including *Encounter*, there was co-operation between the CIA and MI6 (which covers external intelligence and therefore works extremely closely, often from within, the Foreign Office). However, it does more than just back up Woodhouse, it indicates a healing of the rift that had appeared between the two intelligence services during the late '50s and throughout the '60s.

## **RADIO LIBERTY & RADIO FREE EUROPE**

The Congress for Cultural Freedom is believed to have been the idea of Frank Wisner of the American Office of Policy Co-ordination (OPC). Wisner was the US spymaster (CIA deputy director for plans and operations, '51-58) primarily responsible for rescuing, hiding and smuggling vast numbers of ex-Nazis, many of them known war criminals, into the USA (and elsewhere) in order to strengthen Western anti-Communism. He was later very easily duped by the cunning and astute Soviet spy, Kim Philby, who described him as "young...for so responsible a job, balding and running self-importantly to fat."



It was through OPC that Wisner set up the American Committee for Liberation from Bolshevism (ACLB) in '50. As Radio Liberation, ACLB made its first broadcast on 1/3/53. It later became known as Radio Liberty.

Based in Munich, Radio Liberty and a similar outfit called Radio Free Europe were two of the key CIA-run anti-Communist propaganda operations in Europe.

Radio Free Europe was the broadcasting subsidiary of the National Committee for a Free Europe (NCFE) which was another of Wisner's CIA fronts. The NCFE was established in June '49 with Allen Dulles as its first president. Dulles, an old friend and associate of Wisner, had been a leading light in the OSS during World War II. With the assistance of Wisner and others, he had subsequently been responsible for laying the foundations for the creation of the CIA in '47. He later became the CIA's deputy director for plans and operations ('50-51), its deputy director ('51-53), and its director ('53-61). Among the NCFE's board members was DeWitt Wallace, the publisher of the *Reader's Digest*.

Until '71, when a policy of open congressional funding was approved, Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe had been receiving about \$35m per annum from the CIA. Thereafter, they and the Voice of America were overseen by the Board of International Broadcasting (BIB).

When a new head of Radio Liberty/Radio Free Europe took over in '77, he was concerned about the fact that there was tension between Jewish employees and others. This coincided with frequent claims in the Soviet press that many of his own staff were war criminals. He asked for personnel records. They'd all been removed by the CIA. Subsequent enquiries revealed that one key employee who'd recently retired was a former Nazi who had been guilty of a series of atrocities, while many other employees were linked with various uncorroborated accusations relating to wartime and post-war fascist activities and sympathies. The investigation was quietly dropped.

The problem, however, didn't go away. A congressional investigation in '85 found that both stations were broadcasting "unacceptable material... characterised as anti-Semitic, anti-Catholic or even anti-Western".

Interestingly, George Urban, a former director of Radio Free Europe, also served on both the board and the international advisory council of Margaret Thatcher's own think tank, the Centre for Policy Studies.

Frank Wisner became head of CIA covert operations, but grew disillusioned with his work, with world politics and with the way many of his ex-Nazi associates appeared to betray him. He started to drink heavily and began behaving eccentrically. He was hospitalised, had a succession of nervous breakdowns, and finally killed himself on his Maryland farm in '65 with a 20-gauge shot-gun.

## **FORUM INFORMATION SERVICE & PROPAGANDA**

It was through OPC, later to become the CIA's Directorate of Plans, that a series of front companies and organisations was launched in the early '50s. Two such international ventures worked in English and were London-based. *Encounter* was one of these, the other was a press features agency founded through *Encounter* and called *Forum Information Service* (FIS).

Most newspapers and journals lack the resources to employ as many reporters as they need. Features services plug that gap by supplying suitable stories. The smaller the paper and the poorer the country in which it operates, the more it is likely to depend on such services. A politically manipulated news service generally works by supplying a vast number of well-researched and reliable pieces which, though truthful, have been carefully selected to favour a particular view of any given situation (so-called white propaganda). To some of this news a more distinct and even misleading political bias may then be subtly added (turning it into misinformation or grey propaganda). Actual disinformation (black propaganda) can then easily be inserted. This last category is news which is not merely misleading, but which contains information that's untrue or at the very least a deliberate distortion of the facts. When such material is added to grey propaganda, it is often referred to as 'spin'.

## **FORUM WORLD FEATURES & BRIAN CROZIER**

In '65, in a move to convert their small-scale FIS operation into a more effective and ostensibly independent commercial venture, the CIA, acting through a cover organisation called Kern House Enterprises (KHE), re-launched it as *Forum World Features* (FWF) which was owned and financially operated by right-wing US multimillionaire Richard Mellon Scaife.

Brian Crozier, who'd just left *The Economist*, was appointed FWF chairman and took overall control of its operations. It appears that he secured the post through John Hay Whitney with whom he'd become

acquainted during Whitney's '57-61 term as US Ambassador in London. Whitney was effectively running KHE.

Brian Rossiter Crozier was a sub-editor for *Reuters* ('43-44), a *Reuters-AAP* correspondent ('51-52) and a leader-writer and correspondent for *The Economist* ('54-64) throughout which time he edited the journal's confidential Foreign Report. His '80 *Who's Who* entry lists him as FWF chairman from '65-74. From '60 onwards, he was also successful as an author of numerous populist and accessible political books, many of which were fervently anti-Communist. When he left *The Economist* in '64, his post there was taken over by his long-time friend and political associate Robert Moss whose '77 sub-Orwellian piece of political fiction, *The Collapse of Democracy*, envisages a left-wing totalitarian take-over of Britain. It is said to have so impressed Margaret Thatcher that she re-read it and then asked Moss to become one of her speech-writers, which he did. He too is strongly CIA-linked.

From its inception, FWF offered newspapers a regular service through which they would receive up to ten 1,000-word specialist feature articles each week. It quickly became a highly respected and widely used news source, especially in the third world. At one point it was supplying articles to around 250 newspapers and magazines in 53 countries.

The CIA was cautious in its use of FWF. It regularly put out disinformation of a strongly anti-Soviet nature, but also used moderate and even left-wing writers to counter-balance such material. And FWF was used by the CIA in another way. It was a very effective front for intelligence-gathering. CIA operatives could use the cover of being FWF authors to gain access to political hot-spots and to secure audiences with leaders who were hostile to USA. The promise of a book often secured such authors lengthy interviews with their subjects and their staff. These were found to yield much useful information.

The Russian newspaper *Izvestia* published (20/12/68) a list of British personalities whom they claimed were members of British intelligence. The names, which included that of Brian Crozier, appeared in *The Times* the following day. Obviously, without proof, such allegations carry little weight. However, according to Gordon Winter, a former agent of the Bureau of State Security (BOSS, South African intelligence), identical rumours about Crozier were current in his organisation at that time.

## **BRIAN CROZIER'S 'WE WILL BURY YOU'**

In '70, the book *We Will Bury You: A Study in Left-Wing Subversion Today* was published (apparently in conjunction with Common Cause) by Tom Stacey Ltd. Crozier edited the whole collection and was one of its 11 contributors. The other ten, associated with an impressive array of anti-Communist and often intelligence-linked organisations, included Reverend Michael Bourdeaux (of Centre for the Study of Religion and Communism), Maurice Cranston (of *Encounter*, as well being a council member of Crozier's successor to FWF, the Institute for the Study of Conflict), C.H. Ellis (of the Foreign Office, of MI6 in which he rose to third in command, and of a shady intelligence-gathering anti-left set-up called Interdoc), Alfred Sherman (an ex-Communist and a co-founder with Margaret Thatcher of the Centre for Policy Studies who was also active in Aims of Industry (see later in this article), in Roger Scruton's Conservative Philosophy Group and in Western Goals UK, personally inviting French fascist Le Pen to speak at meeting of latter), Brigadier W.F.K. Thompson (a co-founder and council member of the Institute for the Study of Conflict), Harry Welton (who spent 38 years with the Economic League, becoming its publicity director) and David Williams (editor of *Common Cause* bulletin). Given these contributors, it would be fair to infer that Crozier was by now becoming a character of some standing in the UK far-right and in covert intelligence circles.

## **BRIAN CROZIER & THE INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF CONFLICT**

1970 was a productive year for Brian Crozier. It was during that year that he set up the Institute for the Study of Conflict (ISC). The ISC operated primarily a publishing house, producing a series of bulletins called *Conflict Studies*, a comprehensive annual, and several books published in conjunction with established presses. To help its authors and researchers, the ISC ran a library and compiled a vast card index of all known extremist movements. In addition, the ISC organised seminars, lectures and study groups for business leaders and military men in various parts of the Western world. Funding for the ISC came from Kern House (a process no doubt oiled by Crozier's friendship with Kern House boss, John Hay Whitney). Ownership of FWF's library together with some of its research staff were simply transferred, gratis, to the ISC. These facilities actually remained in FWF's Kern House offices, but FWF paid the ISC £2,000 for its continued use of the library.

The ISC carried on receiving Kern House money until at least '72. Full records aren't available thereafter, but there's some indication that covert CIA funding may have continued to reach the ISC. Whether or not CIA backing persisted, by '76, finance from other sources coupled with around 2,000 subscriptions to ISC publications took the institute's annual budget to over £30,000.

In April '75 a team of British journalists from the Granada TV news series *World in Action* was in Washington to compile a feature on the CIA. Their research uncovered a memo dating back to May '68.

Addressed to the then Director of Central Intelligence, Richard Helms, it concerned FWF and quite plainly regarded it as a straightforward London-based CIA propaganda outfit. Part of it read: "In its first two years, FWF has provided the United States with a significant means of counter Communist propaganda, and has become a respected feature service well on the way to a position of prestige in the journalism world." Furthermore, there was a handwritten note on the memo stating that FWF was "run with the knowledge and co-operation of British Intelligence."

The programme's producer decided that the story was too hot for TV to handle. As a result, the affair first saw the light of day via the pages of the London what's on guide, *Time Out*. From there, stories followed in *The Guardian*, *The Irish Times*, *The Washington Post* and even John Hay Whitney's own *International Herald Tribune*.

The story might have died away quite quietly if Crozier hadn't himself responded with claims that the expose was all a smear campaign and that the *Time Out* journalists were part of this conspiracy. Much of the overwhelming evidence to the contrary was only unearthed in direct response to his strident disclaimers. Despite all of this, he's continued to deny the links between FWF and the ISC.

Crozier ceased to be the ISC's director in '79. His other activities had apparently become too much of a threat to the ISC. It seems that, in the end, he was given the choice between the ISC and the rest of his anti-Communist and anti-left work. This choice was offered to him by Leonard Schapiro, a very powerful and highly respected elder statesman in ISC and other intelligence circles. Schapiro, one of the key founders of the ISC, had worked for George Kennedy Young at MI6. Young went on to become deputy director of the service.

One curious element in the welter of allegations, admissions, denials and speculations that hit the media once this whole covert CIA-CCF-FWF-ISC relationship emerged was a letter in Whitney's

*Herald Tribune* from journalist Bernard Nossiter. In it, he claimed that he'd been reliably informed by a leading figure in British intelligence that the ISC was actually an entirely British intelligence operation. While the British were certainly heavily involved, the level of FWF-CIA involvement and the evidence of the *World In Action* findings make the Nossiter claim very hard to credit. Is it therefore another example of black propaganda? If so, it's quite possible that the story was fed to Nossiter as if it were bona fide. Had it worked, it would have very conveniently removed the CIA from the picture. If such a story were a Crozier-Whitney contingency plan, then Crozier's rather futile denials make some sense, as does the story's publication in a Whitney-owned paper.

As far as *Time Out* was concerned, there was one outstanding development that resulted from Crozier's protestations. Several bundles of documents were apparently posted to them anonymously a few days after Crozier's first outburst. These appeared to come from the ISC office files kept by Peter Janke. They could hardly have been more damaging to Crozier's version of the facts. They revealed in full detail the whole of the ISC's development out of FWF. Both organisations were under Crozier's personal directorship and they shared writers and staff. The Institute, ostensibly a non-political body devoted to researching world affairs, was set up as a charity. However, the CIA's interest in it was not for its research work, but for propaganda purposes. Such a role is illegal for a charity.

A strong clue to some of the other sources of ISC funding was also among the leaked documents. This was a '72 memo from John Whitehorn who was at the time Deputy Director of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI). In it, he urged member companies of the CBI to increase their funding of five organisations which he described as working against subversion in British industry. Two of the five were the Economic League and *Common Cause*, both of which ran their own intelligence operations in which they served companies by covertly gathered and supplying information on the (left-wing) affiliations of current and/or prospective employees. A third was Industrial Research and Information Services Ltd (IRIS) which does a similar task to the first two as well as carrying out related work in promoting moderates within the trade union movement. (N.B. IRIS was an off-shoot of *Common Cause*. For a detailed account of their complex CIA links and covert domestic operations see issue 19 of *Lobster* magazine). A fourth was the right-wing and anti-Labour Party propagandist publishing organisation and pressure group Aims of Industry, which is run by

Michael Ivens who was a founder of the Conservative far-right pressure group, the National Association for Freedom which is now known as the Freedom Association. NAFF's first director was Brian Crozier's associate, Robert Moss. Ivens is still on the small (five-man) editorial board of the FA's journal, *Freedom Today* (formerly the *Free Nation*). Crozier was on it until '89. Robert Moss was the journal's first editor. The fifth and final organisation on Whitehorn's list of recommendations for CBI funding was Crozier's ISC.

This particular example of support for the ISC is revealing in another way. So far, we've seen the importance of the ISC as a global propaganda conduit and as a disseminator of information, misinformation and disinformation concerning national and international armed conflict. Now, we're told that it also plays a key role in industrial, economic and employment espionage; that it serves companies and employers by investigating and reporting on activists in the labour force and the union movement. Thus we have covert operations being carried out extensively inside the social and political fabric of Britain. This is Anglo-American intelligence extending its mandate to include what Margaret Thatcher called 'the enemy within'.

From the late '60s, a steady stream of revelations about secrecy and intelligence took their toll. Some of these, notably those in *Ram-parts* ('67) and *Time Out* ('75), are discussed later in this text. Towards the end of the '70s, as a direct consequence of these exposés, the intelligence agencies had thoroughly to rethink their methods of news and opinion rigging. In Britain there was the closure in '77 of the British government's own covert anti-Communist propaganda operation, the Information Research Department (IRD). The closure has been seen by many observers as due, in part at least, to the IRD's close links with the ISC. What has followed has been the effective privatisation of many operations which were previously in the hands of government agencies, albeit covertly. The prolific expansion that's taken place in the network of pressure groups, think tanks and conferences that have sprung to prominence and influence in world-wide governmental decision-making in the last quarter of this century is to a large extent the product of this rethink.

It's very curious to note that Crozier and the ISC appear to have emerged from all of this controversy virtually untarnished. Indeed, until it was taken over by Paul Wilkinson's Research Institute for the Study of Conflict and Terrorism (RISCT) in '89, the ISC continued to operate with full charity status despite the repeated allegations and controversy that surrounded it and despite its blatant anti-left political bias.

Moreover, there seems to have been no change at all in its copious production and dissemination of titles (several hundred in all) covering every aspect and area of international conflict. In fact, contrary to all expectations, the ISC appears to have remained an internationally respected source of news and information. Crozier too, seems to have merely gained friends and increased his influence.

## **THE BOARD OF INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING**

The powerful and influential US Center for Strategic and International Studies is based at Georgetown University in Washington DC. This is a right-wing think-tank with strong intelligence links founded in '62 by David Abshire who is a former director of the Board of International Broadcasting (BIB). The BIB oversees U.S. radio propaganda. In particular, it deals with the two formerly CIA-funded stations, Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe. (N.B. Abshire wrote an attack on the United Nations which was a major feature in the April '76 issue of *Reader's Digest*).

The chairman of the BIB is Frank Shakespeare. He's a former head of the U.S. Information Agency (another vast American cold war propaganda institution which operated separately from the CIA with projects that included the Voice of America and a host of other forays into publishing and broadcasting). Frank Shakespeare is also the present chairman of the Heritage Foundation which is another powerful right-wing American think-tank and pressure group. Robert Moss was on the editorial board of *Policy Review*, the journal of the Heritage Foundation. Brian Crozier has been an adjunct scholar at the Heritage Foundation since the mid-'70s.

## **THE INFORMATION RESEARCH DEPARTMENT**

IRD was a secret government-run anti-Communist instrument of enormous size and scope which came into being in '47. It had been first suggested to Ernest Bevin as a 'propaganda counter-offensive against the Russians' by the then junior Foreign Office minister Christopher Mayhew. The idea was eagerly approved by the Prime Minister, Clement Atlee.

Initially, IRD was given two distinct areas of work. The first was to create grey propaganda (no direct lies, just factual material to which spin, could be added). The second was to mould domestic opinion in Britain. A right-wing priority after WWII was to move popular opinion from anti-Fascism to anti-Communism. IRD's brief



was to use anti-Communist material created with government funding to aid right-wing social democrats within the Labour Party and the trade union movement. Mayhew disseminated IRD anti-Communist propaganda in the Labour Movement via the then Trade Union Congress publicity secretary Herbert Tracey.

IRD was, from the outset, operated on a basis of secrecy. It worked very closely with MI6, with a fair proportion of IRD staff being drawn from the ranks of ex-MI6. Throughout its existence, IRD was represented at most of the MI6/CIA liaison meetings in London. Head of IRD ('53-58) was John Rennie. He later became head of MI6.

During its prime in the '50s, IRD staffing approached 400. On the ground staff were maintained, usually in embassies. IRD output was heavily slanted. Confidential reports went out to heads of state, Cabinet ministers, etc. Other material, that was intended for publishing, went out to sympathetic journalists. Much work went into 'proof' of Moscow links. In true McCarthyite style, a hint of Communist contact was touted as being all that was required to discredit totally the targeted person, party or government. Much IRD work took on this nature. Often, in order to initiate such a campaign, a well-trusted journalist would be given an 'IRD exclusive'. It would duly appear, without any credit. Such planted pieces could then be circulated world-wide by IRD for further publication without appearing to have originated from them. A second IRD propaganda technique depended on their publishing activities. Through a variety of outlets, they published and distributed—to influential people in all walks of life, world-wide—unattributed material which they were encouraged to use as background information for their regular work. In this way, editors, professors, scientists, labour leaders and others were fed with suitable propaganda. Indeed, IRD often included information supplied to them by the intelligence services, MI6 included. Great skill was required to circulate such information without disclosing its source. IRD also made use of a large number of freelance journalists. Through them, material could be placed in papers without the editor being aware that it came from IRD. Such 'freelancers' were usually paid by IRD to take the work and would obviously then get a second fee from the paper that took the work. IRD also published political books through various imprints, including Ampersand which was its own press.

The decline of IRD began in '64 after the last wave of independence celebrations in Africa, and a series of staff cuts over the ensuing decade reduced its staff to 110. However, the deciding factor in its demise was the increasingly right-wing complexion that IRD assumed. This came to a head over its involvement with Brian Crozier's

ISC and FWF. When the latter was exposed as a CIA-funded operation in '75, there were some embarrassingly strong links with IRD. Michael Goodwin, who'd taken over from the industrious Crozier as ISC's administrative director, had previously been with Ampersand (for which Brian Crozier and C.M. Woodhouse both wrote books). Other links included the fact that two ex-IRD staff, Lynn Price and Kenneth Benton were regular ISC writers.

In April '77, David Owen (then a Labour minister, later to be another of the SDP's gang-of-four) closed down IRD. In its place, he set up the similar, though less secretive, Overseas Information Department (OID) to which many of IRD's key staff were transferred. In '81, OID was absorbed into the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Information Department.

Robert Conquest, the well-known author, Sovietologist and anti-Communist, had worked for IRD ('49-56). During the last half of the '70s he held an American post as senior research fellow at the right-wing Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace at Stanford University. Simultaneously, he served Margaret Thatcher both as her personal adviser on Soviet issues and as a regular speech-writer. Like Brian Crozier, he's an adjunct scholar of the Heritage Foundation. The influential anti-Communist journal, *Soviet Analyst*, edited by Ian Elliot, had a three-man editorial board consisting of Elliot, Conquest and Crozier. Conquest has collaborated on several books with his close friend and fellow British right-wing poet-author, Kingsley Amis. Amis, along with Stephen Haseler and Robert Moss, has served on the editorial board of the Heritage Foundation's journal, *Policy Review*. Incidentally, John O'Sullivan who edited *Policy Review*, from '83 to '85 went on to write key sections of the '87 Conservative Party election manifesto.

## NETWORKING

I've no wish to imply that what I'm discussing in this text is in any way a conspiracy and I'd hope that no reader makes the mistake of interpreting it as such. I do, however, contend that it's not mere coincidence but an absolutely deliberate and concerted effort that brings the same individuals repeatedly into play.

Networking is a matter of policy. The 36-page '88 annual report of the Heritage Foundation devoted an entire page, under the heading 'Networking on the Right', to this very subject.

If there's any doubt over this, the Jonathan Institute provides a fine example of the kind of concerted effort to which I'm referring.

## THE JONATHAN INSTITUTE

No examination of anti-Communist disinformation would be complete without mention of the Jonathan Institute. This joint US-Israeli organisation was founded in '79. The institute takes its name from Jonathan Netanyahu, an Israeli commando who died during the raid on Entebbe Airport in Uganda during July '76. There have been two major conferences on terrorism which have been organised by the Jonathan Institute, the first in Jerusalem in early July '79, the second in a Washington Hotel in June '84.

Those attending the first conference included four former chiefs of Israeli military intelligence and a US contingent that represented the core of two leading right-wing and hawkishly anti-Soviet political pressure groups, the Committee on the Present Danger and the Coalition for a Democratic Majority. Notable among these were Richard Pipes, Norman Podhoretz, Midge Decter, Senator Henry Jackson, Ben Wattenberg, George Will, Bayard Rustin and Claire Sterling. Also from the US was George Bush. Bush was part of a substantial US intelligence delegation that included Ray Cline (ex-deputy director for intelligence at CIA) and Major-General George Keegan (ex-chief of US Air Force intelligence). From UK were Brian Crozier and Robert Moss.

Those at the second conference included leading right-wing disinformationists Arnaud de Borchgrave, Michael Ledeen, Claire Sterling and Midge Decter; US heavyweights George Schultz (Secretary of State), Edwin Meese (Presidential counsellor), Caspar Weinberger (Secretary of Defence) and Jeane Kirkpatrick (U.N. Ambassador); and a UK contingent which included Lord Chalfont (who chaired the event), Jillian Becker (who, with Chalfont, set up and ran the IST), John O'Sullivan (of the IEDSS and the Heritage Foundation, and co-author of Thatcher's '87 manifesto) and Thatcherite journalist Paul Johnson. Yitzhak Rabin, the former Israeli Prime Minister, also played an active part in the whole event, as did arch right-wing Soviet defector Vladimir Bukovsky who, along with Michael Ivens, is a vice-president of the Freedom Association.

Basically, the upshot of these two gatherings seems to have been a clear agreement to work on promoting the idea that the Soviet Union and the KGB were directly or indirectly behind every major act or threat of terrorism affecting the West. Indeed, those attending these events went on to do precisely that.

## READER'S DIGEST

On 13/5/81, a young Turk called Mehmet Ali Agca shot and badly wounded Pope John Paul II in St Peter's Square.

In the inside cover of his '85 book, *Moscow Rules*, Robert Moss claims to have been the first to reveal the Bulgarian involvement in the assassination attempt. He says that he did so in testimony to the US senate in June '81, less than six weeks after the event.

Claire Sterling wrote a book in '81 called *The Terror Network* which was commissioned (and serialised) by *Reader's Digest*. In it she tries to link international terrorism with the Kremlin. There's a brief mention of the Papal assassination attempt, in which she admits Agca's association with the far-right Grey Wolves, but suggests that this might have been a cover for his true Communist affiliations. In the September '82 issue of *Reader's Digest*, she further develops this theory, by linking Agca with the KGB via the Bulgarian secret police. Then in her subsequent book, *The Time of the Assassins* (published in January '84), she presents a fully-fledged theory of a Soviet-inspired attempt to kill the Pope. She claims to have put in many months of travel and investigation in order to develop and prove this hypothesis. If so, Robert Moss's assertion to have known all of this just a few weeks after the event seems to be an astonishing claim. Since then, there's been a vast amount of evidence presented to show that the Moss-Sterling claim is simply untrue. For example, the whole of the Spring '85 issue of the leading US investigative journal, *Covert Action Information Bulletin*, is given over to debunking what has become known as the Bulgarian connection.

So what's going on here? What's the importance of this improbable plot? Italy was the European stronghold of the Communist Party. Here was where Euro-Communism looked as though it might actually gain power and thence, according to Western anti-Communist scare-mongers, set about taking over the rest of Europe. For this reason, the CIA had for years been contributing vast amounts to the Italian anti-Communist media. By '75 this had reached a known annual covert budget of around \$75m. Obviously, a story proving that the KGB had tried to kill the Pope was a gift. It would do irreparable damage to Communist aspirations in this most Catholic of countries. World-wide, it would further the idea that Communism was the dark force which pitted itself against all that was good and Godly. So how did the story come about? The Bulgarian link promoted by Sterling came to her through one John Panitza, himself a former Bulgarian who'd taken U.S.

citizenship and who lived in Paris. A known CIA agent, he was also the European editor of the *Reader's Digest*. He is said to have personally invented the Bulgarian connection and to have passed it on to Sterling.

The role of *Reader's Digest* in all of this is a crucial one. Numerous senior editors of *Reader's Digest* have had intelligence backgrounds as have many of their reporters, freelancers and occasional feature-writers.

As I mentioned earlier, the journal's publisher, DeWitt Wallace, was a director of one of Frank Wisner's CIA fronts. One of Wisner's closest personal friends was Stewart Alsop, for many years a leading political feature writer for *Reader's Digest*. Alsop had been in the OSS and was exposed as a CIA-man by Carl Bernstein in '77 (see *Rolling Stone*, 20 October).

In *Covert Action Information Bulletin* (No.29), Fred Landis lists half-a-dozen senior staff members and nine contributors all of whom have particularly close ties with the CIA. Among the nine contributors are Alsop, Allen Dulles and Brian Crozier.

Crozier contributed an article entitled 'Time to get tough with terrorists' to the June '73 issue. He wasn't alone. The CIA's Herb Meyer, assistant to William Casey who served as director of the CIA from '81-87, contributed a major anti-Soviet feature two months later, while Stewart Alsop featured in the following month's issue. Three months after that, Claire Sterling wrote a feature on Italy's chances of democracy for the December issue. And, as recently as June '88, Melvin Lasky contributed a feature entitled 'The old truth behind Russia's new image'.

Incidentally, Herb Meyer crops up in an entirely separate context as an associate of David Hart. Hart, a friend and personal adviser to Margaret Thatcher during the '80s, ran the anti-Labour propagandist group, the Committee for a Free Britain (CFB). The CFB was founded in '87 with the backing of the Economic League and operated out of the offices of Michael Ivens' Aims of Industry. Hart's links with the CIA, with MI5 and with covert campaigns to discredit the Labour Party were exposed in *The Guardian* (14/12/89). Towards the end of the '80s Hart, who was himself a close friend of William Casey (CIA director '81-87), had been planning to set up Samizdat, an anti-Soviet Western news service using dissident sources. This was to be an operation run jointly with Herb Meyer.

Later in the Landis article, attention is drawn to the anti-left bias and intelligence links of five of the journal's more recent editors.

Notable among these is John Barron. He's written two best-sellers about the KGB. Both were commissioned by *Reader's Digest* which serialised them prior to book publication. There's an interesting side-light provided by Barron's list of acknowledgements in the first of these two books. His mention of Brian Crozier as director of the ISC in London doesn't appear alongside other UK sources. Instead, Barron lists him in a paragraph that's otherwise devoted to CIA and other American intelligence sources. Obviously even Barron thinks of Crozier and the ISC as American intelligence assets!

Landis says there are many others, in addition to the ones he names, who work for *Reader's Digest* and have intelligence links. Among these is one very obvious figure. Eugene Lyons was the most important and influential of all *Reader's Digest* editors. His views helped to form and set the consistently anti-left and specifically anti-Soviet tone that has dominated the politics of the journal since the early '50s. Lyons was a veteran anti-Communist who'd testified to the House Committee on Un-American Activities in '59. He was a trustee of Wisner's ACLB out of which came Radio Liberty.

It's not just the blatant political bias and the intelligence links which point to direct CIA involvement in *Reader's Digest*. Several articles have appeared in the magazine which could only have been fed to the journal by the CIA. Other articles, especially those reporting on what were later shown to be covert intelligence operations, show such a transparently pro-CIA line that they could hardly have come from any other source.

If the *Reader's Digest* seems an unlikely vehicle for the CIA, think again. In many ways it's the most obvious and perfect of outlets. It has the largest world-wide circulation of all magazines. It has achieved this by presenting a range of material in a style aimed directly at the unsophisticated reader. There are no uncertainties, no shades of grey, no questioning of values. Everything is presented in black and white. *Reader's Digest* has, in its superficially simple presentation, a highly refined and skilful journalistic style which purports to offer its readership the absolute truth. It would never wish to be anything less than utterly believable. For the propagandist, it provides the ideal environment. It would be astonishing if this most populist and accessible of journals wasn't used to carry politically biased reporting. In fact, of the hundreds of political articles carried by the monthly editions of the journal in the second half of this century, only a handful have not been anti-Soviet, anti-left, anti-union and/or pro-Western (and specifically pro-American). Editions differ around the world, so features can

be tailored to suit the country or countries for which each is intended. The influence of US intelligence is particularly noticeable in English language editions and in the *Selecciones*, the Spanish language versions which are widely read throughout Latin America. Perhaps because serious journalists and the educated public are quick to dismiss the magazine, it has continued to influence its vast and usually politically naive readership with hardly a murmur of criticism. By preaching to floating voters the world over, it has played a crucial and almost entirely unrecorded role in undermining the global left and the Soviet bloc in particular.

It's staggering to think that of those of us who are able to read in this world, almost every single one of us, in non-Communist countries at least, will, at some time, have read one or more copies of *Reader's Digest*. Despite this, there are virtually no books and very few critical articles on this remarkable publishing phenomenon.

## ARNAUD DE BORCHGRAVE

Robert Moss writes fiction, much of it political and drawing on his own views. His '77 sub-Orwellian book, *The Collapse of Democracy*, envisages a left-wing totalitarian take-over of Britain. It is said to have so impressed Margaret Thatcher that she re-read it and then asked Moss to become one of her speech-writers, which he did.

Two other books by Moss are *The Spike* ('80) and *Monimbo* ('83). The former is (ironically) about manipulation of the Western media by the KGB. It claims to be a "story so explosive it can only be written as fiction." The latter is about a secret visit to Nicaragua by Fidel Castro during which he reveals his Russian-backed master-plan to destroy America. Both books feature Arnaud De Borchgrave as Moss's co-author.

De Borchgrave is a fascinating figure in his own right. The editor of *Newsweek* ('51-80), he was apparently asked to leave when it was discovered that he was keeping dossiers on the supposed pro-KGB activities of his colleagues.

In '78, De Borchgrave claimed that the heads of "intelligence services in Washington, London, Tel Aviv and Pretoria, each of which I stay in close contact with" were his "key, best sources of information" in the world. He has since claimed to have twice been offered (and to have twice refused) a CIA post.

Shortly before his departure from *Newsweek*, De Borchgrave wrote a letter strongly backing up a claim by fellow right-wing disin-

formationist Claire Sterling that the murdered Paris-based political activist Henri Curiel had been a KGB agent. Sterling later had to back down and pay a fine when Curiel's family and friends brought law suits against her for slander.

He is an adjunct scholar of David Abshire's intelligence-linked Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). In late '84, the CSIS produced a report that attempted to substantiate Claire Sterling's KGB-Bulgarian version of who was behind the plot to kill the Pope. The report, *The Papal Assassination Attempt: A Case of State-Sponsored Terrorism*, was written by a seven-man team. The seven were: Arnaud De Borchgrave, Paul Herze (former CIA propaganda officer and the man believed to have been the source of the whole story), Zbigniew Brzezinski (President Carter's national security advisor, active in several important right-wing groups such as the Committee on the Present Danger, and the man who first proposed the formation of the Trilateral Commission), Max Kampelman (also on the Committee on the Present Danger, President Reagan's Geneva arms control negotiator), Ray Cline (ex-CIA deputy director for intelligence), Robert Kupperman (CSIS terrorism specialist) and Marvin Klab (who'd already written a one-sided programme on the same theme for NBC-TV).

Ray Cline is, like de Borchgrave, a senior associate at the Georgetown CSIS. He's also a founder of the U.S. Global Strategy Council which has retired General E. David Woellner (president of the Moonies' CAUSA World Services) as its executive director. Arnaud de Borchgrave became a council member, as did former CIA director William Colby, retired Admiral Thomas Moorer (ex-chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and on the board of Western Goals), and three members of the US chapter of the WACL.

On 20/3/85 Arnaud De Borchgrave was appointed editor-in-chief of *The Washington Times*, a paper owned by the Reverend Moon, founder of the Unification Church (a.k.a. the Moonies), who was at that time in prison. De Borchgrave had been involved for years in a range of Moonie-owned/run right-wing political ventures. Among these was the secretive US Global Strategy Council which has De Borchgrave, two former CIA directors and three former chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on its 27-strong board.

The National Intelligence Study Centre (NISC) was set up in '77 by William Casey (director of the CIA, '81-87). Its president is Ray Cline (major CIA man and Dulles aide). Chairman of its advisory board



was John McCone (director of the CIA, '61-65). Its stated aim was to "improve public, academic and journalistic understanding of the role of intelligence in the American political process." Most of the others involved in this set up are/were CIA operatives or CIA assets and it's hard to see it as being anything other than a clean-up front for CIA operations.

The British MP, Rupert Allason, is its sole UK representative. He sits on its advisory board. Under the name Nigel West, Allason has written a series of widely available books on the British intelligence services. The author's close involvement with so many covert operations veterans and purveyors of disinformation hardly inspires confidence in his own objectivity.

The NISC has produced a video-cassette for schools and colleges. It features four speakers: Ray Cline, William Casey, US senator Malcolm Wallop, and Arnaud De Borchgrave.

## THE PINAY CIRCLE

Following in the footsteps of the ubiquitous Brian Crozier brings us to yet another strongly intelligence-linked organisation. The Pinay Circle (PC) is ostensibly an informal group of conservative anti-Communist politicians, bankers, journalists, businessmen and others. It was set up by French international intelligence agent (and ex-lawyer) Jean Violet. It had ageing French ex-MP Antoine Pinay as its nominal figure-head. Brian Crozier and Edwin Feulner have been key participants in its twice-yearly meetings, as have Sir Arthur Franks (MI6 chief, '78-82), Nicholas Elliott (of MI6), Julian Amery (far-right British MP), William Colby (ex-director of the CIA) and General D. Stilwell (ex-director of the DIA, US military intelligence), together with leading figures from European governments and from their intelligence services.

The Pinay Circle is a clandestine group which seems to have taken a great interest in the replacement of left-wing and liberal governments around the world by their right-wing rivals. Two major leaks have provided information. The first came as part of the mass of documents (1,500 in all) leaked to *Time Out* in '75 from the files of Crozier's ISC. The second was an article in the German magazine *Der Spiegel* (No.37, '82) entitled 'Victory for Strauss'.

From these two we glean a fair amount about the role of Crozier and about the PC's efforts to aid the establishment of right-wing governments in Europe — particularly the election of Margaret Thatcher in Britain ('79) and the attempted restoration of the

discredited Franz Joseph Strauss in Germany ('80/81). From Crozier's records we learn that, acting on behalf of the PC, Violet commissioned an ISC book, *European Security and the Soviet Problem*, which was published in January '72. According to the minutes of a 21/1/72 meeting between the ISC (represented by founding director Crozier and subsequent director Michael Goodwin) and the 'Pinay Committee' (represented by Pinay and Violet), the PC was delighted with the book. There's a clear picture given of the effectiveness of this co-operation. Pinay had personally given copies to both President Nixon and Henry Kissinger. A couple of days earlier, he'd given a copy of the French-language edition to President Pompidou. Meanwhile, Violet had been distributing copies to conservative (i.e. Christian Democrat in the main) German politicians and had shown copies to the Spanish Minister and to the Pope. 500 copies had been bought by the New York-based National Strategy Information Centre (set up by Frank Barnett, an early member of the Committee on the Present Danger) and a further 500 ordered by the American Bar Association. Not only had the first print run reached those in power and effectively sold out the day it was published, but orders were pouring in for the reprint. And the minutes added that Crozier had been given documents by Pinay "relating to their next project".

The *Der Spiegel* data is based on the papers of Dr Hans Lange-mann, a former top-ranking German intelligence (BND) officer turned whistle-blower. One document (dated 18/11/79) describes Crozier as "the militant conservative London publicist" who was "director of the famous ISC up to September '79" and who "has been working with his diverse circle of friends in international politics to build up an anonymous 'action group', transnational security organisation, and to widen his field of operation. Crozier has worked for the CIA for years...." It goes on to make it clear that this 'action group' is the PC, and to suggest that the CIA, MI6 and Thatcher herself were among those kept fully aware of Crozier's work, and that they therefore endorsed it. Robert Moss, Crozier's long-time crony, is singled out as an important bridge between Thatcher and British Intelligence.

Crozier's own papers indicate what the group is offering to do. It can (a) feed material to journalists; (b) use TV; (c) run both overt and covert pressure lobbies; (d) mount demos; (e) make full use of intelligence and security agency influence and resources; and (f) carry out undercover financial transactions for political aims. Given the proper funding, it can also (a) mount international campaigns to discredit hostile personalities or events; (b) create a private intelligence service

to meet a particular political aim; and (c) set up and run offices in key cities (including London, Washington, Paris, Munich and Madrid) worked from one central office.

Perhaps the most sinister point in all of this connivance is to be found in Crozier's own notes. Here he talks about the "specific aims within this framework" being to "affect a change of government in (a) the United Kingdom — accomplished, (b) In West Germany...." True or false, this one word 'accomplished' is a chilling indication of how influential and powerful Crozier really believes himself to be.

Back with the Langemann papers, in a confidential memo to Dr Waltner (from '80), we are told about the PC's meeting at the Madison Hotel in Washington (1/12/79). Langemann, describing himself as the "leading operator for Special Affairs for the Gehlen Organisation", says he personally paid Violet 30,000DM for PC activities. In addition, he says Gehlen (the ex-Nazi and co-founder of CIA) had Violet as his special agent for many years on a monthly stipend of 6,000DM.

Langemann describes a meeting of a new 'inner circle' within the PC that grew out of Crozier's transnational security attempts. Violet, Graf Huyn MP, Crozier, Elliott (described as an ex-deputy head of SIS — which is MI6), General Stilwell (DIA) and Donald Jameson (CIA) met in Zurich (5-6/1/80) and discussed (a) promoting Strauss in international press, (b) exerting a Euro-Conservative influence over Rhodesian and South African internal politics, and (c) setting up a powerful propaganda radio station directed at Islamic countries including those bordering the Soviet Union. Langemann urges prompt and highly-covert international intelligence action in support of Crozier's group.

As you'll have realised by now, this whole maze is a highly complex affair. MI6 man, Nicholas Elliott, was also a council members of the Research Foundation for the Study of Terrorism which was set up by Paul Wilkinson along with Michael Ivens and Norris McWhirter. In '89, it was Paul Wilkinson's newly-formed Research Institute for the Study of Conflict and Terrorism which absorbed the ISC.

## ENCOUNTER AGAIN

Networking brings together its own prime movers. For a graphic illustration of this, it's now worth looking at the list of contributors to the issues of *Encounter* published during the '60s and '70s. Before you read this article, it's highly unlikely that you'd have thought anything of the fact that the list includes Brian Crozier, Robert Moss, George

Urban, Lord Chalfont, Daniel Bell, Leonard Schapiro, Robert Conquest, Irving Kristol, Melvin Lasky and Stephen Haseler. Had these ten been no more than run-of-the-mill contributors to a literary magazine, it's hard to imagine that we'd have had Thatcherism, the fall of the Soviet Union, the rise of European Fascism, Reagan or Bush. We'd be living in a very different world... though probably no nearer to that mythical system we call democracy. After all, unelected government is nothing new. And self-appointed decision-makers are what we earn for our ignorance of covert and behind-the-scenes politics.

## THE RAMPARTS REVELATIONS

In order better to understand just how hard the CIA has worked to keep Europe not merely free of Communism but actually in line with American politics, we need to look at another set of revelations about the CIA. This one was the first real body-blow to the agency.

Early in '67, the US journal *Ramparts* ran an extensive and sensational exposé on CIA involvement in student organisations. Since the early '50s, the CIA had been pumping massive amounts of money into the National Student Association (NSA) of America through a series of dummy funds and foundations. Money from the Borden Trust, Price Fund, Edsel Fund, Beacon Fund and Kentfield Fund went to the J.M. Kaplan Fund, the F. Frederick Brown Foundation, the Independence Foundation and the Rabb Foundation. These then passed the funding on to the NSA. The control thus exercised over the NSA by the CIA was almost total. The Agency was consulted by NSA officials on every issue of policy and in formulation every aspect of its work (scholarships, conferences, publications, exchanges, etc.). Set against the backcloth of the Vietnam War, campus peace protests, occupations and the whole international student power movement which was to hit its zenith in '68, these revelations were amazing.

As if that wasn't enough, there was an international arm to this CIA operation. The International Student Conference (InSC, to avoid confusion with the Institute for the Study of Conflict) was an organisation to which student bodies around the world were affiliated. Its funds were such that it was able to run regular conferences to which student leaders or their representatives were invited, all expenses paid. Given the times, it was a remarkably moderate (and moderating) body which took the fire out of many of the issues presented for debate. InSC funding came from NSA, the San Jacinto Fund and the Fund for Youth and Student Affairs. This NSA money, it transpired, came from the CIA

as a result of direct NSA–CIA negotiations and thus with the full knowledge of NSA officials. The CIA then used the Catherwood Foundation, the San Jacinto Fund and the Fund for Youth and Student Affairs to transfer InSC-earmarked funds to the NSA. All three funds were therefore CIA conduits. It follows that a very great majority of the money that found its way into the InSC coffers was from the CIA.

It was also revealed that the British National Union of Students (NUS) had received funds for a British counterpart to the American dummy foundations.

Curiously, while the French and Irish students' unions actually quit InSC over the revelations, the NUS response was a very lame report presented to the November '67 conference in Margate. Much of the report was devoted to criticising those who dared to question the role and dealings of NUS in the affair. In fact, many NUS officials had themselves been quite deeply involved in InSC. Notable among these was Geoffrey Martin, who'd led the British NUS delegation at the '64 InSC Conference in Christchurch, New Zealand, before becoming NUS president, then international affairs vice-president in '65. He spent two years travelling around the country telling students' unions that there was no substance to these rumours — even when they became allegations and then revelations. He claimed that he had the facts and there was absolutely no basis of truth in what people were hearing. He was lying, either about having the facts or about what they revealed.

In '72, Geoffrey Martin crops up alongside Brian Crozier, Robert Moss, Lord Chalfont and others in a book called *The Ulster Debate: A Report of a Study Group of the Institute for the Study of Conflict*. Martin is currently Head of External Relations in the London offices of the European Commission.

One of Geoffrey Martin's predecessors as NUS President was J. Gwyn Morgan. Morgan was elected to the post in '60 on an anti-Communist ticket, and represented the NUS at the '62 InSC Conference in Leiden. He left in '62 to become Assistant General Secretary of InSC, taking its top civil service post, that of Secretary General in '64. As InSC's AGS, he was in charge of finance. It was he who directly negotiated the transfer and subsequent expenditure of several million dollars from the American foundations. During the five years ('60–64) of his association with InSC, Morgan visited over 80 different countries and got to know numerous heads of government and social democratic party leaders throughout the world. In early '65 Gwyn Morgan became head of the overseas department of the Labour Party, the post that had

been Denis Healey's prior to his election to Parliament. Morgan was an ardent pro-European and supporter of Roy Jenkins (who was by that time seen as the leading light of the Rodgers pro-Market grouping which had acrimoniously split from Gaitskell back in '62 after he'd persuaded the Labour Party to oppose Britain's membership of the EEC). Morgan served as assistant general secretary of the Labour Party ('69-72). In '79, he became head of the EEC press and information office for Canada.

## THE AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON A UNITED EUROPE

If it seems that European Commission jobs rewarded those who served CIA interests, that would hardly be surprising. Back in the late '40s, the American Committee on a United Europe (ACUE) was formed as a transatlantic support group to the newly formed European Movement. The make-up of the ACUE top management could hardly give a clearer indication of the importance that the CIA attached to a united and pro-NATO Atlanticist Europe. The ACUE chairman was William Donovan, former director of the OSS (which had recently become the CIA). Its vice-chairman was CIA director Allen Dulles. Its secretary was George Franklin, then director of the Council on Foreign Relations and later co-ordinator of the Trilateral Commission. ACUE executive director was Thomas Braden, head of the CIA's division on international organisations.

## SECOND THOUGHTS

A very curious sidelight on the way these events pan out is the fact that two of the three '67 editors of *Ramparts* magazine, David Horowitz and Peter Collier, have now crossed the political spectrum. They resurfaced in the mid-'80s as fervent supporters of Reagan, running a right-wing US think tank called Second Thoughts. It is hawkish, arguing for escalation of US foreign intervention, and is fiercely anti-left. Some conspiracy theorists suggest that the *Ramparts* story was never anti-CIA, but merely the product of an internal split with the CIA itself. They see *Ramparts* as having acted as a vehicle for information leaked deliberately by CIA operatives who'd had enough of the wilder element within the Agency. It's possible. Internal rivalry, dissension and maverick individuals certainly feature strongly in intelligence agencies. However, Horowitz and Collier offer a very plausible account of their slow disaffiliation from the far left and their eventual disillusionment with all they once so ardently espoused.

Following his post-*Ramparts* '67 revelations about the CCF-CIA relationship, Josselson resigned, but was retained as a consultant. The organisation changed its name to the International Association for Cultural Freedom (IACF). Finance came from the Ford Foundation and a new Director was appointed. He was Shepard Stone. We need now to look at a further aspect of Europeanism in which he'd been involved.

## **SHEPARD STONE, JOSEPH RETINGER AND THE EUROPEAN MOVEMENT**

In the late '40s Shepard Stone was with the U.S. High Commission in Germany. He was approached, in private, by an extraordinary character called Joseph Retinger, a friend of Hugh Gaitskell, and asked to help finance a fairly new organisation called the European Movement. He agreed to do so.

Joseph Retinger was a Pole whose exploits were legendary. Then almost 60, he'd globe-trotted all his life, mixing with world leaders and continually involving himself in international political intrigues. He'd been deported from France, been destitute in Spain and Cuba, been an adviser to the Mexican Government and later carried out espionage assignments for them, worked in Britain with Ernest Bevin and Sir Stafford Cripps, was wartime personal advisor to General Sikorski and his Polish Government in Exile in London, then (following Sikorski's death in '43) teamed up with General Sir Colin Gubbins in SOE, the British wartime intelligence network. At the age of 56, Retinger was parachuted into occupied Poland to make contact with the resistance forces there. On 8 May '46, Retinger addressed the Royal Institute of International Affairs and warned of the impending Soviet threat to Europe. European unity had been a Retinger theme for years. Now, at last, he was getting there. From this speech began the European Movement. Retinger organised the First Congress of Europe in The Hague in '48. From this began the Council of Europe.

In July '48, accompanied by the Belgian Prime Minister Paul Henri Spaak, Winston Churchill and Duncan Sandys, Retinger visited the USA to seek funds for the European Movement. Following a meeting with Allen Dulles, the American Committee on a United Europe (ACUE) was formed and was officially launched during a dinner in honour of Winston Churchill on 29 March '49. Retinger, as Secretary General of the European Movement, received almost half a million pounds in covert US funding between '49 and '53. Retinger

was also Director of the European Youth Movement and took one and a half million pounds for that organisation from the CIA via ACUE.

## THE BILDERBERG GROUP

As if this was not enough, Retinger had one more ace up his sleeve. In '52, he began drawing together the most powerful and influential figures in US and European government, industry, intelligence, banking and finance. He formed a European group and then an American one. For three days, 29–31 May '54, under the chairmanship of Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, the two groups met up in the Hotel de Bilderberg in the small Dutch town of Oosterbeek. This was the first of what was to become an annual and highly secretive series of meetings in different venues around Europe and the USA. They became known as the Bilderberg Group. Retinger died in '60 and his small grave can be found in North Sheen Cemetery in South London. According to *Lobster* magazine (No.19), Retinger was with MI6.

It's hard to measure the importance of the Bilderberg Group. Its covert nature and the numerous impressive figures who've attended meetings have inevitably made it intriguing. With virtually no publicity, an hotel somewhere in Western Europe or the USA is taken over and re-staffed for a week with security personnel. Then for three days, prime ministers, presidents, heads of industry, heads for banking, military and intelligence chiefs and others gather there (including editors and key reporters from leading news media who subsequently make no report of the event). There are, in fact, no news reports on these extraordinary comings and goings. The minutes of the meetings are secret. It's therefore hardly surprising that conspiracy theorists (right-wing and left-wing) are quick to lay the injustices of the world, real and imagined, at this carefully locked and guarded door. In many ways they may actually be right to do so. Even casual encounters within the context of Bilderberg can have far-reaching results. I offer one example. In '58, following on directly from a Bilderberg discussion with Shepard Stone, then International Director of the Ford Foundation, Denis Healey was instrumental in the setting up in London of the now highly-influential NATO think-tank, the Institute of Strategic Studies.

In all the dealings of the CCF and in most of the other post-'53 covert intelligence operations in Europe (including many of those I've already outlined in this text) Bilderbergers are directly and indirectly involved.



## THE RHODES-MILNER GROUP

Many of those who took part in the Bilderberg meetings were associated either with an American body called the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) or a British body called the Royal Institute of International Affairs (RIIA, a.k.a. Chatham House). These two were set up as transatlantic counterparts after World War I and have played a major role in Anglo-American relations ever since. The establishment of the Bilderberg Group was designed to bring Western Europe into this UK-USA arena, while the subsequent establishment (in '73) of the less secretive Trilateral Commission was intended to create a supra-national cartel involving the USA, Western Europe (including Britain) and Japan.

Let's look at the roots of this internationalism.

In his controversial book, *Tragedy and Hope*, Carroll Quigley talks of "an international Anglophile network which operates, to some extent, in the way the radical Right believes Communists act". Such a concept has its roots in the teachings of John Ruskin who, in 1870, became the first to hold the new Slade Professorship in Fine Arts at Oxford. Essentially, he held that an elite, the educated English upper class intelligentsia, "were the possessors of a magnificent tradition of education, beauty, rule of law, freedom, decency, and self-discipline" that would disappear if it were not extended to the English lower classes and the non-English masses throughout the world. These ideas, the theme of Ruskin's inaugural lecture at Oxford, were a sensation. In particular, they inspired one student, the young Cecil Rhodes. He formed a secret society that later developed into the Round Table organisation. Among the society's founding members were many former Oxbridge graduates who were also committed to the teachings of Ruskin. Among them was a close and trusted friend of Cecil Rhodes, Lord Alfred Milner. After Rhodes' death in 1902, he took charge of the Rhodes Trust. It was he who actually established and organised (1909-13) the semi-secret groups known as the Round Table Groups. These were set up in Britain, throughout the British dependencies and in the USA. They still function in eight countries. A quarterly magazine, *The Round Table*, (still functioning) was set up in 1910.

In 1919-20, Milner and co. set up the RIIA which is based at Chatham House in London. Similar institutes of international affairs were subsequently established ('19-27) in the British dominions and in the USA. The US organisation was the CFR.

Quigley's book focuses on the power structure established (via the Round Table Groups) by the original Rhodes-Milner group. From

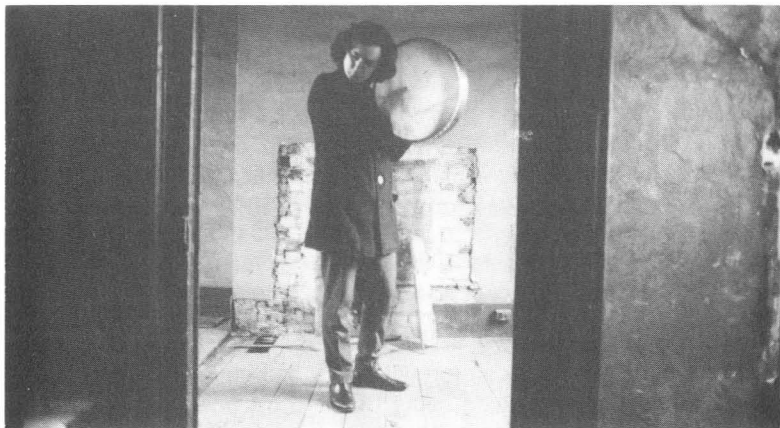
his book have arisen a plethora of conspiracy theory, especially from right-wingers who are quick to tie the whole thing in with supposed Jewish and Communist plots for world domination. In America, this came to a head with first Jimmy Carter and then George Bush being perceived as Trilateral Commission presidents.

## **THE ROYAL INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

The RIIA is a powerful and highly respected body. It was formed as “an independent research organisation to promote the scientific study of international relations”. According to its own publicity, it “attempts to identify key problems likely to influence the future conduct of relations between States and to act as a forum for those concerned with these problems from the universities, Government and industry.” Julian Amery of the Pinay Circle and Peter Blaker of IEDSS are both closely associated with the RIIA.

## **THE COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS**

The CFR was established in 1921 and is “dedicated to improved understanding of American foreign policy and international affairs.” Its active members include many of the most powerful figures in American politics, banking and industry. As a consequence, it’s far more directly associated with central government than is its British counterpart. There is no doubt that it makes a major contribution to US political and economic power. The question is whether it actively exerts control and, if so, to what extent and on behalf of which vested interests. Its critics vary from those who merely question the nature and extent of its influence to those who produce elaborate conspiracy theories. Within any large and powerful organisation, it’s easy to identify a set of ‘conspirators’ and then produce a quite convincing argument to back up your particular theory. In the case of the CFR such perceived plots usually point to a grand design to achieve world power. On the far right, particularly, these stories abound, with finger pointing to jews, freemasons, crypto-Communists, industrialists, certain families or any number of other secret societies and sinister alliances. The truth, if you accept that I’m not just another cranky conspiracy theorist (!), is that the CFR is a major American piece in the jigsaw which this book and others like it go some way towards piecing together.



*Aaron Williamson (Photo: Marc Atkins)*

# The Anatomy of Utterance

## The Poetry and Performance of Aaron Williamson

### Richard Dyer

'And yet,/ the possibility of utterance/ still hangs/ inside  
the mouth,/ poised at the site/ where mind/ meets body,/  
encircling that area/ of muscle/ which, most often,/  
is the agent of their division.'

Aaron Williamson; *Cathedral Lung*.

Aaron Williamson's intense emotional response to the world is mediated through his own condition — that of profound deafness — not by the use of conventional body language, but by a new and affective 'language of the body'.

To see him perform is to witness someone in the throes of a deeply felt cathartic experience, not mere spectacle, but a process of public encounter with a most private and intimate anguish. Inhabiting a world of silence he is well placed to use silence itself as a tool for manipulating our response to the act of utterance; he sculpts with silence; in one remarkable sequence he starts an unheard scream at the level of a crouching squat and spirals it upwards with a taut, helical twisting of his body, until he reaches a full tiptoed stretch, at which point the scream is allowed release — as are the audience — who can be heard to exhale as one, such is the attention he commands.

Volume is used in every increment on its continuum, from silence, through whisper and normal voice, to a truly awful primal scream. Williamson's poetry expresses emotion not by the use of words which stand for that emotion i.e. love, hate, frustration etc., — but by the use of words or sounds which employ the para-linguistic attributes of those emotions, tone, volume, pitch and vibrato.

He uses his whole body, especially his spine, neck and face in a contorted paroxysm of expression, apoplectic, caustic and sibilant by

turns, and although he has had no training in mime, dance or other body disciplines, he is adept at drawing from these areas at will; but his seemingly choreographed movements arise from a spontaneous and intuitive understanding of his subject — his own deafness. He confronts this central aspect of his life directly, sidestepping the easy and naive supposition that deaf people should express themselves visually, and by implication, that the blind should utilize music or speech. Although the ability to hear his own utterance is denied him, to produce it is not and it is this very paradox which lends his performance such force.

The influence of Antonin Artaud's<sup>1</sup> *Theatre of Cruelty* — with its intention to release feelings usually repressed in the unconscious — can be felt in Williamson's performance, which presents a subversive challenge to the passivity of the spectator, a passionate plea to the need for emotional engagement.

Such is the precise control of his voice, that it is hard to believe that he cannot hear it himself, and indeed he does receive feedback from the vibrations within his body. This resonant contact with the audible world is dramatically utilized in his use of the Bodhran<sup>2</sup> the shallow wide diameter drum of Irish origin, which he beats with its double ended stick. The Bodhran is pressed close to his chest and jaw, its rhythmic time signature metering a series of poems entitled *Cacophonies*; his heart and jawbone act as a sound-box, transmitting the sounds to him, allowing for an interaction between drum and delivery. He now employs an even larger drum to punctuate his prose, producing a thunderous and terrifying climax to his performance.

*Cathedral Lung*, the poet's new collection, is divided into four sections, the opening eponymous one consists of thirty-one separate but interrelated pieces which can be read as one continuous litany of tormented ataxic prose, or sampled at random to give synecdochic sound-bites of anguish and ecstasy.

Images of the body in terrifying states of dissolution and transformation predominate, especially the tongue — dead or inutile — even though paradoxically this is the organ Williamson uses with such power; we must always remember that it is producing a stimulus addressed to a facility which he does not possess. One of the opening stanzas chillingly evokes the act of speech without the reward of sound; 'Tongue/ pulls along/ pulleys, tarpaulins and traps/bolted to nets and levers/leaving/a grey-black hammer metallic/grease/behind;/the whole thing/ groaning/the whole thing/breathing ballast/a snail slides towards daylight/tunnelling iron/into the roots;/winches

hoisting the/dead mass of dead purple/ weight/onto the silken weight/of lips that languish./ lying there./ pululating./ flicking/ — and then it entered into my throat.’

Images of the body are mixed with those of the building; ‘A lung is formed by walls of rotting stone...the lung bleeds over an array of deep damp moss through which can be distinguished rows of overgrown facades, all crumbling.’

Nature, the Cosmos, architecture and the body are continuously cross-referenced and conjoined into a rhapsodic, gnostic vision — as above so below — the alchemical conjunction of opposites, the macrocosmic and microcosmic, makes us unnervingly aware of our smallness in relation to the universe, and yet also of our universality; we are in and yet each contain the universe, we have built cities of vast complexity and yet we ourselves, infinitely more complex, have been built.

Williamson takes us on a vertiginous and intoxicating head-long rush from our deepest biological geographies to the very edge of the stellar cosmos and on into the profound silence of deepest space, at the same time exterior and interior; ‘A lever lies near to a stony ruin; the central slab impacted into a violent clangour. The light slides away from a landscape which is nailed by its edges to a vacuum in space;’, the prose sometimes fragments into a rhythmic, concrete evocation of tinnitus<sup>3</sup>; ‘...ache, utter./UPPITY TACK/Take, cutter./CATATEPTIC BETA/Pucker...’, this radical deconstruction of sense and syntax is more fully explored in the second section of the book, *Cacophonies*, fifteen page and a half long sections type-set in the form of a double helix, expanding, contracting, almost buckling under the strain of the tortured dynamic of this new rendering of feeling into words; words used not only for their literal meaning — but also for their sound and their response to the words with which they find themselves placed.

The third section, ‘Dear Surgeon’ subtitled (notes on voicing), contains some of the most literal writing in the collection, explaining as if in a letter, the poet’s relation to his deafness and his voice, though even here the writing is never merely narrative, ‘...a block of concrete/ houses a single vibrating reed/ and this constitutes/ my voice.’

Some lines carry the full weight of the poet’s frustration and despair; ‘...the more you realize,/or ‘make real’/the finality/that this tongue/emits no language;/that it is, in fact,/an organ misappropriated/ into a function/for which it never was/intended.’ — and more directly — ‘The mouth becomes/the site/at which one’s/thinking/is snatched away/from its nurturance/of the heart.’

The last section contains excerpts from *Freedom, Liberty and Tinsel*, Williamson's first collection, published in 1989, these pieces although less original, contain the seeds of the brilliant work which was to flourish in *Cathedral Lung*.

Aaron Williamson is rich and evocative as a poet and chillingly successful as a performer, to see him is to experience that rare but essential physical response to the spoken word.

## NOTES

1. 1896–1948, French theatre director, associated with the surrealists, he was a great influence on Camus and Genet, and a seminal influence on the avant-garde theatre of the fifties and sixties.
2. Pronounced 'Bodrrun'; in Gallic the word actually means deaf or dull.
3. The constant interior noises often heard by the deaf, consisting of actual words repeated endlessly, or abstract ringing or whistling.

*Cathedral Lung* was published by Creation Press in 1991, (83 Clerkenwell Road, London EC1). Aaron Williamson's collection, *A Holythroat Symposium*, is available in 1993.

## CACOPHONY

A Holythroat Symposium  
tuned into its neckbox  
relays the static  
the overlap of phonemes  
pneumatic  
insistent  
in the pull of surges  
wireless  
and jabbering the  
fricatives  
*...enough force to counteract*  
*the suction*  
the turbulence  
battering  
time and again after  
time, through the  
squall bursts  
a palatal noise  
heaped up in different



manners  
the exchange of sensation  
incessant  
distinct  
distributions of energy  
*a gut talk,*  
*head to head gut talking*  
*as regards*  
*labiodental, linguadental...*  
—guttereal—  
intensity referred  
back in ad-hocery  
those frequencies  
of spectra  
diminishing  
to flickers  
pervasive voice-sources  
duration      intensity      frequency  
sustained into incoming  
bulletins  
cable-crazed, diatribes  
through scintilla  
and studding  
a facula  
sheen-tendoned  
ligaments and straps,  
the rigup framing

lariat transmissions  
    emitting  
    diaphanous lassoes  
rife-rebus in many tongues  
    pitch  
loudness and crawl-emphasis  
    a pulsar turned up  
    into surcharge  
    the quasi-buzz  
    nexus  
*to excite the interruptives,*  
    *the noncontinuents...*  
that is          the asterisk  
    pump-valved afloat  
    in the bitumen  
    axis  
of flat and thin signals  
    spew-nova  
table-talk          blocktackle  
    as well: the hookup  
mongered with link-people  
    the vinculum  
    used-imagery  
*outside of the acquired language...*  
*primitivised by feral sickness*  
*engaged in hallucinoids...*  
and stratifying, ramifying

a spargefacting diaspora  
through intersecting meshwork:  
uniformity indicated  
in the points eloquently by  
of view brain,  
altered, preverbal  
dichotomous in organism  
rapid spectral representing  
changes intensity  
in time as one  
picked up dimension  
between coiling  
relays before  
become being  
compacted  
all about it;  
centre, a clustered  
vox sustain stimuli  
into its nasals harmonic  
& antiformants periodics  
glides and concentrating  
semivowels the feedback  
yammering of beyond  
impedance along channel  
spray and and cavity  
emerging and merging

## Carlos Castaneda

### Pete Scott

It is probably true to say that no one has done more to enrich the literature of 'mind expansion' than Carlos Castaneda. The author of several highly acclaimed studies of shamanism among the Sonoran Indians, he was at the forefront of the psychedelic movement in the late '60s. Since then his reputation has grown to the point where he is now linked with Huxley, Burroughs and Timothy Leary as a pioneer of inner space.

Castaneda's spiritual journey actually began in the summer of 1960 when he was introduced to don Juan Matus, a Yaqui Indian from the American Southwest. Although the encounter was quite casual it was to have far-reaching implications for both men. Castaneda was at the time studying anthropology at the University of California. His special interest in medicinal plants took him on several field trips to the Arizona/Mexico border, where he hoped to gather information from the Indians of the region. It was during one such trip that he met don Juan for the first time. The two men struck up a casual conversation in a bus station after being introduced by a mutual acquaintance. Castaneda noticed that despite his advanced years the old Indian conveyed an impression of vitality and personal insight. "I was annoyed... at being seen through by those remarkable eyes," he later wrote.

It later transpired that don Juan was a brujo or sorcerer who allegedly possessed some kind of 'secret knowledge'. As such he was given a wide berth by the Sonoran Indians among whom he lived. Castaneda, however, was fascinated by his new-found acquaintance, and visited him on several occasions. In June 1961 he began to serve a magical apprenticeship under don Juan, using psychedelic drugs (peyote, jimson weed and mushrooms) to open new centres of vision. His subsequent initiation is described with scrupulous attention to details in such books as *The Teachings of don Juan, A Separate Reality* and *Journey to Ixtlan*.

Read consecutively these books constitute one of the most remarkable literary odysseys of recent times. It is Castaneda's involve-

ment with his material that makes it all seem so real, so credible and compelling. Under don Juan's tutelage he not only studies the techniques of shamanism, but becomes well versed in their lore. One of his first tasks entails learning how to 'see' (Castaneda always uses quotation marks) or develop occult perception. The process of 'seeing', don Juan explains, is indispensable to the sorcerer's way of life. Its effect is to penetrate the illusion of gross physical matter and lay bare the underlying reality. As he acquires this clairvoyant faculty Castaneda frequently enters what he describes as "a special state of non-ordinary reality." There he is confronted by all manner of bizarre entities — a talking coyote, a sorceress in the shape of a crow, Mescalito, the spirit of the peyote plant, etc. It is, of course, possible to dismiss many of these encounters as mere drug-induced hallucinations. After all, 'druggy' people are occasionally prone to psychic-type revelations. ('60s rock star Jim Morrison, whose chemical intake was prodigious, once told a reporter: "A while ago I became aware that there were spirits, other beings in the space around me. They have spirit but they don't manifest themselves physically. They are aware of us, but we do not like to think that they exist. I think they envy us our lives.") Nevertheless, there are many intriguing parallels between Castaneda's experiences and those found in Fortean lore.

A particularly significant episode is related in *A Separate Reality*, when Castaneda, returning to his car after a sojourn in the desert, finds three Mexicans waiting for him. The first of these is a dark-haired man in his late 30s carrying a bundle on his back. The second is a younger man, and the third a woman in her 40s, overweight and apparently very tired, her face covered with beads of perspiration. The Mexicans ask Castaneda for a ride back into town but he protests that there is no room for them in his car. Nevertheless their entreaties make him feel "very sad and ill-at-ease." This sensation builds in pitch and intensity and Castaneda finally drives away from the scene in a panic. Later, when he discusses the incident with don Juan he is told that the three Mexicans weren't human beings at all, but "those who are not people" (*los que no son gente*). They were *forces*, don Juan continues, "neither good nor bad, just forces that a brujo learns to harness."

Don Juan refers to these inexplicable forces as the sorcerer's *allies*. They can, he says, assume any size or shape as the situation demands. the only way to detect their presence is by the process of 'seeing' with the inner eye. "Real people look like luminous eggs when you 'see' them. Non-people always look like people... You cannot 'see'

an ally. [They] take different forms — dogs, coyotes, birds, even tumbleweeds or anything else. The only difference is that when you 'see' them they look like whatever they're pretending to be."

If don Juan is to be believed, these strange mimetic creatures, the allies, exist all around us. In common with many UFO-related phenomena they are able to mold themselves to suit the cultural beliefs of the era or milieu in which they appear. Their motives are obscure, but at the same time "Anything they do is significant." When questioned about their function in the scheme of things don Juan replies: "That's like asking me what men do in the world. I really don't know. We are here, that's all. And the allies are here, too; and maybe they have been here before us."

The allies, it seems, cannot "take the lead" or exert a direct influence on the affairs of mankind. Nevertheless contact with them is potentially dangerous because they tend to bring out the worst in human nature. Their existence, if considered purely for the sake of argument, sheds new light on a wide range of contemporary mysteries — everything from Bigfoot and the Surrey Puma to appearances of the ubiquitous Phantom Hitchhiker. It explains, for instance, why so many UFOs and their occupants appear to share a link with human consciousness. American author and researcher John A. Keel believes that this link is actually a kind of symbiotic relationship. UFOs, he says, are psychic constructs, thought forms or transmogrifications of energy. They emanate from a parallel dimension, perhaps using the power of human emotion as 'fuel' for their manifestations. "In order to materialize," he writes in *Operation Trojan Horse* (N.Y., G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1970), "...they need to drain off energy from human percipients, or from power lines and automobile engines."

Don Juan makes a similar disclosure in *The Fire From Within*. Allies, he tells Castaneda, are drawn to strong emotional fields. "Animal fear is what attracts them the most; it releases the kind of energy that suits them." Later in the same book he expands on this statement, adding that "Once an ally catches you, you either have a heart attack and die, or you wrestle with it. Then, after a moment of thrashing around in sham ferocity, the ally's energy wanes. There is nothing an ally can do to us, or vice versa. We are separated by an abyss."

This "sham ferocity" is an odd feature of many reported cases involving Bigfoot and the phantom big cats of Fortean lore. Two such cases are recorded in Jerome Clark's *Creatures of the Outer Edge* (Warner Books, 1978), written in collaboration with Loren Coleman.

The first of these allegedly took place at 8:30 PM on April 10th, 1970. The victim, Mike Busby of Cairo, Illinois, USA, was driving along the perimeter of Illinois' vast Shawnee National Park when his engine unaccountably stopped. As he got out of the car to investigate, Busby was attacked by a strange creature, six feet tall, black and upright, with "almond-shaped greenish-glowing eyes." This fearsome apparition knocked Busby to the ground and proceeded to 'wrestle' with him. During the ensuing struggle it inflicted superficial wounds on his chest, abdomen and left arm with its dull two-inch claws. Despite its upright gait the creature was unmistakably cat-like, with short wiry hair and a wet odour. Fortunately it was frightened away by the headlights of an approaching diesel truck, thus allowing Busby to regain the safety of his car. It started without trouble and he drove away from the scene at high speed.

The second case quoted in *Creatures* is less well documented but follows much the same pattern. This time the victim is a woman, Mary Crane of Rising Sun, Indiana, USA. Like Busby she is attacked by a mysterious cat-like animal "as big as a good-sized calf with a tail as long as a door." Here again the creature seems curiously reluctant to do any real harm. Instead it contents itself with pinning Crane to the ground and licking her face. When a rescue party appears on the scene it emits "a piercing shriek", leaps over a nearby fence and disappears, leaving its victim shaken but physically unhurt.

Why were Mike Busby and Mary Crane mauled in so half-hearted a fashion? To what end? For what purpose? By ordinary standards of animal behaviour such attacks seem strangely pointless. They do, however, generate a powerful emotional response. It is almost as if these creatures are inert without the energy of human emotion, shapeless without human expectations.

David Tansley, an authority on all forms of alternative medicine, has expounded a similar view. His book *Omens of Awareness* (Neville Spearman Ltd., 1977) is a penetrating study of the occult sciences. Tansley sees many classic UFO encounters (including the now largely discredited Scoriton Mystery) as "ally scenarios." He also applies the same rationale to cases involving the so-called Men In Black, sinister agents of terror who made their first appearance on the scene circa 1947. The MIB are usually described as swarthy men with Oriental or vaguely 'foreign'-looking features. They are said to threaten or openly harass UFO witnesses, warning them to remain silent about their experiences or face dire consequences. Their threats, however, are seldom if ever fulfilled. "What interests me," writes Tansley, "is that

[the MIB] fit like a glove into the theory of the allies, which take the form expected of them." Precisely!

This theory, the ally hypothesis, provides a springboard for exploring many 'high strangeness' aspects of the UFO enigma. Is it, I wonder, feasible to include under the same heading such classics of Fortean lore as the Mattoon Gasser case, or the famous Kelly-Hopkinsville siege? In these and many other instances we find much the same pattern: a series of assaults seemingly carried out for no other reason than to generate a rising tide of fear and paranoia. Opportunities to do serious physical harm are largely avoided. The Kelly-Hopkinsville 'goblins', for instance, were equipped with lethal-looking claws but did nothing more bloodthirsty than stroke the head of one terrified victim. One is irresistibly reminded of don Juan's dictum that: "There is nothing an ally can do to us and vice versa. We are separated by an abyss..."

Throughout the Castaneda books there are precise parallels and correlations with the UFO mystery and related phenomena. The same forces appear to be at work in both situations, the same patterns prevail, the same inscrutable motives are involved. At one point, for instance, don Juan warns that the allies "are capable of bringing out the worst in a person." One need only think of the personality disorders affecting many UFO contactees for verification of this. We are also told that animals, especially dogs, are afraid of the allies. This too is a common feature of many UFO sightings. Even don Juan's speculation that the allies "may have been here before us" is echoed in Keel's *Operation Trojan Horse*: "It seems probable that these forces have always been extant on this planet."

In view of all this it seems reasonable to assume that UFO and ally related phenomena may share a common source. The nature of this source is open to conjecture, But Castaneda's don Juan books certainly provide numerous avenues for further research. (Albeit one must make allowances for the fact that the author compiled many of his field notes under the influence of mind-expanding drugs.) I leave the task of carrying out this research to other, more capable hands.





*Genesis P-Orridge*

# **Behavioural Cut-ups And Magick Genesis P-Orridge**

## **1. The Key**

My primary concerns in space and time (that situation which society informs us is named “being alive” or, on more intellectual days, “reality”) are Control, Human behaviour, and an inkling that underlying everything is a web of parallel causes and parallel effects upon which we can exert more manipulative pressure than we are led to believe by the aforementioned society.

Whilst it is true that we did not ask to be here, it is also true that we did not ask to not be here either. Birth and Death at this stage of evolution appear to our everyday senses to be the only certain points in this maelstrom of “being alive”. The word “being” is such a nice word, to be, to be in, being, a state of mind and/or body, it is a rather comforting and seductive word. Yet like all words it has reverberations. Languages interfacing, wars and migrations cross-fertilising, needs to do more than grunt, urges to express more than biological functions and prerequisites.

History, that which travels the macrocosm of space and time, lives inside words like an ectoplasmic hermit crab in a stolen shell. Words in turn live inside us too like more hermit crabs, protecting themselves from discovery of their secret, and words live outside us freeranging in our culture like viruses waiting for an appropriate host. This function, the function of words, has been deeply investigated by W.S. Burroughs in literature, and to a lesser extent through tape, film, and collage works earlier in his career. However, looking back with an overview, this first layer and its direct symbiotic relationship with all interpretations of control and all the interactions and permutations it exposes satisfied him and occupied him enough.

Brion Gysin, “The Master”, who largely introduced W.S.B. to this whole scenario saw further, saw the other layers, was not satisfied. He studied languages, western and eastern etymology, had a devastating

knowledge of European migrations and interactions going back as far as records allowed. He was aware of the processes touched upon earlier. He observed first hand for 23 years the threads of pulse and frequency generated through Moroccan music. Where the master musician has certain phrases and sequences of sound that are the equivalent of a spoken language and guide and instruct the players as the music is performed. Music that therefore literally “speaks” of primal roots and impulses of behaviour. That triggers endorphine assisted alpha-wave neurological states that inspire and reveal the fluidity of occult physics. That all is light, which is nothing more than an idea, and that light is, within that, infinite particles exploding and racing in every direction simultaneously. A quaquaversality. And that is the nearest to a key we might get. And from this Brion gave us paintings and drawings which began with the desert, with desert light, and then seemed at first glance to become more abstract, myriad scratchings and markings swirling until he showed you they were the desert still, the light itself, the very particles of sight. And they were also of the desert dwellers, the keepers of the music, the speakers of the frequency. The expressors of magic lore. The inhabitants of Pan, drowning in unspoken rituals.

## **2. The Door.**

In relation to this event and its primary concerns “The Door” is the cut-up. There is now a clear representation of the system that concerns us. Contrary to the image we are presented with by those Feudal Overlords that administer control, our Society is not part of the 20th century in terms of its command structure and behavioural inhibitors. The great majority of people are to all intents and purposes “serfs” and they exist on the minimum level of potentiality expansion at which they can function to perpetuate the status quo. No one conglomerate of businessmen, or politicians, or masonic manipulators control Control. They do, however, administer its needs. It’s an obvious truism that most injustices in our Society are protections of the vested interests of a minority over the majority. For hundreds of years the majority of the population have been bullied, conditioned, trained, suppressed and censored into subservience. Into an unconscious yet massively potent acceptance of the impossibility of an evolutionary change in human behaviour patterns, in the impossibility of aspiring to the maximum growth and repossession of their own innate potential. Control is the web that traps us and injures our intuitive belief in our selves. The word, literature, parallels this process. With a cut-up you can break down the

expected, inherited values and assumptions and retrain yourself to look at information in apparently random juxtapositions. This technique is invaluable in revealing possibilities. Describing "reality" more accurately than any linear system. OUR LANGUAGE IS LINEAR. LIFE IS NOT. At any given moment we are receiving input to the exteroceptors both in obvious ways and less obvious ways (i.e. sound enters our body through all its surfaces, via vibration and frequency, not just via the ears). These inputs contribute to motivation in the cerebral cortex. Simultaneously to this process memories are being compared to the new information and the cerebral cortex then modifies it and adds it to a command for the sub-cortical regions. In those sub-cortical regions effectors carry out the command response to the stimuli. While these neurological functions are taking place, the body continues its metabolic functions and actions semi-automatically. Random events outside the individual's body are also being registered and/or affecting the individual. Emotions are triggering and interplaying in the subconscious. The entire nature and state of that individual is in a state of flux. There is no fixed point, no definition, no finite answer or specific formulae.

The closest to a possibility of describing the reality of things as opposed to the inherited linear materialistic model of the state of being alive has to be a kaleidoscopic, integrated, non-linear method. It has to contain, at least implicitly, every possibility, every impossibility, every conscious and unconscious thought, words and deed, simultaneously. The cut-up is a practical way in to this. Life is quite simply a stream of cut-ups on every level. Given the discovery of a MEANS to describe and reveal reality, we can also identify Control.

Control denies intuition and instinct particularly, and dreams of all forms, randomness, thought. All these and other behavioural and psychological perceptions generate impulses in individuals that result in them asking "Why?", saying "No" and refusing acceptance. To believe more is possible than they have been (literally) LED to believe. That they need accept nothing until they have analysed and evaluated its value and applicableness to them.

### **3. The Room**

A room, means to have to grow and develop. It is also a physical place, and like all words it is a metaphor too. The room is where you are, and where you want to be. To go into the room is to choose to reclaim yourself. Until people learn to respect themselves again, to care for

themselves, to treasure emotions and feelings. To have self esteem and accept no one uses suggestion of what is possible for them to be, what skills they might have and how far those skills can be pushed, to always make up your own mind about what is right for you, what has value to you in every aspect of life. To re-learn as a new second-nature to make up your own mind and not be directed, intimidated or accepting of any established system of values and behaviour. Until all these processes are returned to an individual's own control and constantly re-analysed to check against laziness and habit for its their own sake, there can be no possibility of evolution and expansion for the individual and, through them, no expansion of Society. What is needed therefore is a practical, functional method that effectively deconditions, disinhibits, short-circuits societies behavioural taboos and control. A physical back-up to the processes of always asking "why?". Accepting nothing as true.

It was this quest for a method that led me first towards performance art, within which context I attempted to set myself tasks that forced me to locate barriers and inhibitions related to pain and sexual thresholds, for example. Once identified and measured, I was able to think about whether they were actually useful to me, or were merely inherited. This regimen in turn introduced me to new mental states akin to trance and yoga, and unexpected blocks or embarrassments that were illogical to me. Ritualisation fused with impulse and instinct integrated with intuition, an open minded examination of my most deeply buried and normally inarticulated drives and desires and an approach devoid of preconceptions that re-educated my idea of what I was as an "Individual", what my real boundaries were, and what it was possible for me to become. What I had been bombarded with as my self-image by Education, Religion, Society, the Family and the Media in their various colluding forms, subtle and blatant, bore no relation to what I experienced and perceived. There are always levels beneath the level of what we identify as a problem. Suddenly I realised that ritual, and various previously named "occult" practises were in fact methods of short-circuiting Control of the individual, destroying their compliance with what they are trained to expect, want, or aspire to. They were a parallel method in the medium of Behaviour and self-reclamation to the cut-up in Writing, Film, and Video and Music. So cultural methods of decontrol COULD just as effectively be applied to ourselves. To describe more accurately both how we are at one point in Time, and how we can re-define ourselves from that point on. To be aware of all the simultaneous factors that must be clearly and honestly allowed

free-play for us to work in a focused, accurate manner towards a fully integrated character. That recognises and embraces every aspect of its complex self, free of any self-delusion. That finds its own ratios within a complete re-integration of the conscious and subconscious mind of sexuality, emotion, intelligence, knowledge, relationships, dreams and so on. Not only a developing of so called logical perceptions, but also a genuinely realistic blending of the illogical. Something which recognises that nothing is fixed, that these ratios are for ever changing and should be seen as directions.

#### **4. The Person**

The person could therefore fight back. And a long standing tradition of magick appeared the most relevant area and structure within which to research and express the possibilities open to the individual and collective redefinition and evolution. As Burroughs said about cut-ups, "How random is random?"

The picture we get from cut-ups is more accurate than any traditional description. What has always been presented as the "irrational" becomes far more accurate and plausible than the rational explanation we are endlessly urged and bullied into accepting. The psychology of the unconscious explores the background of the so-called rational mind both by disciplined investigation and hysterical dissociation of thought habits. There is a strong implication that the essence of magick is psycho-integrative. It reinvests the individual with an awareness of psycho-genetic history. It lets them face and re-evaluate their own responses of themselves. It allows them to be awake and fight subservience and adherence to any and all preconceptions. The myths and symbols of the past are attempts to articulate intimations of what is possible. The themes of mythology are not just archaic knowledge — they are living actualities of human beings. They exist as signposts and facets of interlaced themes that together make up human behaviour, character, aspiration and potential. To touch ourselves and respect ourselves against all the odds is crucial to survival and to appreciation and effective use of the state of being alive. The need is to find a way into the deepest areas of the psyche and how it affects and triggers behaviour and response: to redevelop an integrated relationship with our so called "primitive" perceptions from which we have been alienated by society.

Western society has built a norm where unthinkingly the majority of people dismiss, ridicule, attack, abuse, trivialise, experience fear of,

suppress or consign to novelty any experiences that provide evidence or intimations of their inherited system of explanations. Fact, whatever that is, is given credence over dreams; acceptance by a group is paramount, deviation and rebellion generate fear. Those with the courage openly to declare independence and hope are isolated and scorned. Force is constantly projected as the primary motivation for ambition. Every level of our society is riddled with the concept of competition, beating the other person or side. This is reinforced by Capitalism, by Sport, by Success in Entertainment and all fields, by Religion and by Politics. Compete, compete. Competition is a variant of aggression. By using ritual, gradually getting a clearer map of every interconnection of one's conscious and unconscious mind and coming to terms with the revelation that flux and constant change with no anchors or reassuring formulae and no guaranteed rewards or salvation, one can liberate oneself from all the inherited constraints that nine times out of ten directly or indirectly bolster the status quo. It literally allows us to face ourselves and face facts. It supplies recognition that within each individual there are many types and shades of consciousness with diverse intentions and values. By investigating our blocks, inhibitions, real desires and motivations in preconceived moments of time set aside to explore thresholds of perception and response, to check exactly what one's limits are and decide if they are one's REAL limits or merely convenient or complacent, we can reassemble and discard as we wish.

## **5. The Idea**

To heal and reintegrate the human character. To set off psychic detonations that negate Control. To re-evaluate and value phenomena that appear to defy reason. To retrieve choice in all things. To avoid separation and compartmentalism in every aspect and level of life, internal and external. To always attempt to express as truly as you can what you really feel and think. To locate and identify one's skills and develop them. To be aware of human frailties and futility whilst caring intensely. To push to the edge and struggle always to feel and express more. To despise all forms of complacency. To carry through one's ideas 24 hours a day for a lifetime. To accept nothing. To assume nothing. To encourage others to repossess themselves and maximise their potential. To exchange and liberate information. To understand and treasure the preciousness of feelings, emotions and sentiment. To rebuild the parameters and possibilities of relationships. To locate and choose without guilt or fear one's individual and natural balance of

sexuality. To change and not see change as contradiction or inconsistency but actually how things are and should be. To see time as an unfixed and irreplaceable resource that one receives only a limited and unpredictable amount of. That that time never be wasted or squandered. To try to work towards knowing that you used every second constructively. To seek self-improvement not self-gratification.

Control. Control needs time (like a junkie needs junk). Time appears linear. Cut-ups make time arbitrary, non linear. They reveal, locate and negate Control. Control hides in social structures like Politics, Religion, Education, Mass Media. Control exists like a virus for its own sake. Cut-ups loosen rational order, break preconceptions and expected response. They retrain our perception and acceptance of what we are told is the nature of reality. They confound and short-circuit Control. All Control ultimately relies upon manipulation of behaviour. In culture the cut-up is still a modification of, or alternate, language. It can reveal, describe and measure Control. It can do damage — but that is not enough. Magick as a method is a cut-up Process that goes further than description. It is infused with emotion, intuition, instinct and impulse, and includes emotions and feelings. It operates actually within the same medium, “Behaviour”, as Control. It is therefore essential as a system to challenge, emasculate and render impotent the source of Control itself. Control disintegrates. Magick integrates.

The idea is to apply the cut-up principle to behaviour.

The method is a contemporary, non-mystical interpretation of “Magick”.

The aim, then, is reclamation of self-determination, conscious and unconscious, to the individual.

The result is to neutralise and challenge the essence of social control.

As we said previously, the essential structure of our Western Society is Feudal. Only the names have been changed to protect the guilty. Most of the population are merely a natural resource, like oil, coal, water that is drawn upon for self-perpetuation and for self aggrandisement by those vested interests that administer Control. No one controls Control anymore. It has a parasitic and debilitating life all its own. Certain very select groups have merely inherited the almost priestlike role of its protection and nurturing. Control replicates and expands inexorably in a manner like malignant cancer or, to use a current example, like AIDS, affecting individual aspirations and potential, our sense of unity and freedom, social and ideological optimism in



precisely the same terminal manner that those diseases affect our bodies.

Time is a key to the perception of this process. Cancer and AIDS work through time. They are linear problems. Their destructiveness accelerates at an ever-increasing rate until the termination of the host body. Control needs Time also. It hides in social structures like politics, religion, education, mass media, the nuclear family. Just like a virus it exists for its own sake. It relies upon a certain element of belief in a rational order, acceptance of inherited values and measurements, hopelessness.

Control relies upon manipulation of human behaviour. Culture is an expression of states of mind rooted in the effects of behavioural conditioning, albeit often obliquely. Culture is also a modification of language that can be read. It can reveal, describe, measure and expose Control. Control can be short circuited. Once identified and isolated, the perimeters and limits of Control are visible. We need to search for methods to break the preconceptions, modes of unthinking acceptance and expectations that make us, within our constructed behaviour patterns, so vulnerable to Control. De-construct to Re-construct. We must retrain our inherited concept of what we are told is "reality".

By applying a non-linear fragmenting process to every aspect of perception, reality, society, behaviour and ideology, it is possible to modify and confound Control, and jar its manipulation of behaviour and violation of self-respect. Magick, as we see it, is precisely this, a fragmenting process that does damage to Control and its primary tools of guilt and fear. It can operate within the same medium, "Behaviour" as Control. It presents a system to challenge, emasculate and render impotent the parasite itself. In a real sense it detoxifies the behavioural immune system, restoring its balance. Control disintegrates, Magick integrates.

I repeat, the method is a systematic application of the fragmenting Process to all modes of inherited behaviour and belief.

The intention is reclamation of self-determination and self-description by truly freed choice.

The result is to neutralise and challenge the centre of social control.

## Alex Sanders: Shaman Or Showman? Leroy Green

Various observers of the occult scene — myself included — have noted that it's quite common among so-called seers, clairvoyants and prophets who are prone to self-publicise, to ignore conveniently their 'miss' predictions and to crow about those that happen to come true.

An example I may cite is that of the late Alex Sanders, self-styled King of the Witches in Britain. Sanders, the son of Harold Sanders, an erstwhile music-hall cornet-player and later hod-carrier, claimed to have been initiated as a witch at the age of seven, by his Welsh grandmother, Mary. This lady, also known as Bibby, is supposed to have achieved this in a brief ceremony involving getting the young Alex to strip off, bend over — and then making an incision in his scrotum with a sickle-shaped knife. It is a procedure which, I confess, I have never encountered in my not inconsiderable studies of witchcraft, ancient and modern. However, Sanders' biographer, June Johns, claimed the curious procedure was "a pale replica of those once carried out in Sparta when males were emasculated to become priests of the moon goddess."

The peculiar pantomime is supposed to have occurred at grandma Bibby's terrace house in Chorlton, near Manchester. After the scrotum-nicking ritual, gran showed Alex her magical implements — including a black-handled knife, known among modern witches as an athame, and a crystal ball.

Sanders claimed he discovered years afterwards that he was the last descendant of a line of witches dating back to the 15th century.

I won't go into too much detail of the Sanders saga before he achieved fame — or notoriety: anyone sufficiently interested can read it in the June Johns biography. Suffice it to say that Sanders' own version of his life, as related to his biographer, reads like a cross between a Dennis Wheatley novel and *Room at the Top*.

I first met Alex Sanders in 1970, when he and his then-wife Maxine were living in a basement flat near Notting Hill Gate, London. My initial impression was that he was a pleasant enough, wiry chap with a distinct Manchester twang, who liked a pint or several of bitter — especially if someone else was buying. When I asked him how he managed to live — he had no other occupation than being self-proclaimed King of the Witches — he shrugged, raised the pint I'd just bought him, smiled and said: "Money just comes in."

I also spotted straight off that, even if his witchcraft might have involved genuine powers, he was first and foremost a showman. But it didn't take a Sherlock Holmes to figure that one out — he was clearly fond of dressing up in 'Wiccan' robes and regalia, and loved ceremonial. "If I ever forsook witchcraft," he said, "I'd become a Roman Catholic. It's the nearest thing to witchcraft that I know."

But the dead giveaway to his penchant for performing was the fact that he was involved with a Leicester rock band, Black Widow, who were promoting their first album, *Sacrifice*, on CBS records. Part of the act around this time was the mock ritual sacrifice onstage of Sanders' young wife Maxine, by the group's lead singer, Kip Trevor. Sanders told me he had helped the group with the lyrics for the album — tracks included *Come to the Sabbath*, *Attack of the Demon* and the title song — but he frankly admitted that he was not impressed with the finished product.

I knew this to be slightly short of the truth because earlier, in March 1970, *Disc and Music Echo* had carried a story headlined: MAGICAL MYSTERY POP Are these Groups Playing with Fire? And a second-deck heading said: Alex Saunders [*sic*] King of the Witches, says: "Stop these Black Magic stage acts."

The group had already formulated an act, using another girl who, according to Sanders, "took fright, so to help them give their Press shows my wife agreed to act in her place."

The girl who "took fright", according to *The Sun*, was student Joyce Terry, 19, who "collapsed...after she had been stripped naked during a pop group act — in defiance of a ballroom ban. And two members of the Black Widow group were treated for shock after the number at London's famed Lyceum Ballroom."

It was after this that Sanders kindly stepped in. "If they were to get the proper procedure and I will help them with that," he told *Record Mirror's* Lon Goddard, "they could not only help to rid us of the bad name that is associated with magic, but become famous in the process."

He was certainly wrong about the latter — Black Widow fared noticeably less well than another band then under the same management, Black Sabbath.

By the time Black Widow was admitting having problems with its third album, Black Sabbath's lead guitarist, Tony Iommi was driving a Lamborghini and lead singer Ossie (later Ozzie) Osborne had a Jaguar.

Black Widow's failure to achieve their advisor's prediction, however, did not do any harm to Sanders' own desire for fame and publicity.

Another key to Sanders' more showman-than-sorcerer persona was an album he himself made, called *A Witch is Born* (A & M Records, AMLS 984), released on June 12, 1970.

Narrated by fellow-witch and author Stewart Farrar, it is a recording of the initiation of a girl, named only as Janet, to Sanders' coven. Farrar describes what is happening, sotto voce, interspersed by Sander's own flat, Mancunian monotone, as he takes Janet through the various steps of initiation. Some of the 'ritual' utterances sound like doggerel written for a pantomime. The B-side conducts the listener through a ceremony known as The Great Rite, which is a thinly-disguised euphemism for the sexual act, accompanied by further ritual utterings, delivered with equally monotone solemnity.

After his brief flirtation with the rock band, Sanders devised a stage show of his own, which he planned to take on tour. It featured visual simulations of various wiccan rituals like the one on the record. It was accompanied by atmospheric lighting and other effects, some of which did not always go right on the night.

In January 1971, for example, during his 'demonstration of witchcraft' at The Classic Cinema at Hendon, in north London, a censer of burning incense fell over and Sanders' blonde wife Maxine fell onto it. She collapsed and had to be taken home suffering from burns. Back at the cinema, meanwhile, police had to be called to calm down and disperse a crowd of punters who, furious at the show's sudden and premature curtain, were demanding their money back.

Ironically, Sanders had previously told a *News of the World* reporter: "It will be the most dangerous and frightening act ever presented onstage. I will use hypnotism and fire." His intention, he said, was for he and his coven to induce a demon to possess Maxine as she lay on the altar.

In fact, Sanders' attempt to turn witchcraft into some kind of bizarre variety show was doomed to failure.

When he tried to put on his charade at a Bournemouth night club, two frisky youths from the audience leapt onstage and tried to get hold of Maxine, who was doing some sort of dance, wearing only a flimsy robe. Sanders, who was wielding a sword and a candlestick, intervened. One of the men got a knock on the head and a minor cut from the sword. The night club manager stopped the show and cancelled all future performances.

Another spectacle that went wrong for Sanders the Showman was seen by millions of TV viewers. Wearing only an elaborate headdress and a gold lame G-string, Sanders began to draw blazing torches over his arms and body. Somehow, the flames, or a spark from them, caught Sanders' gold lame G-string and it caught fire. The cameras carried on filming as Alex struggled, panic-stricken, to beat out his burning jock-strap.

White witch Kevin Carlyon, of Bexhill, East Sussex, was later quoted as quipping, "Since that day, his theme tune was *Great Balls of Fire*." Carlyon is said to own a much sought after video of the spectacle.

Despite Sanders' claims about his childhood initiation and his ancestral lineage of witches, there is another, telltale side to his fondness for fantasizing. As late as 1961, Patricia Crowther, high priestess of a Sheffield witch coven, received a letter from Sanders dated November 9th. It said that he had "always wanted" to be a witch and bemoaned the fact that he had been unable to contact anyone who could help him. Mrs Crowther had recently been on television, talking about witchcraft. When Sanders travelled to Sheffield at her invitation, she was unimpressed with him and declined to initiate him. However, I understand that a former member of Mrs Crowther's group, who had formed her own breakaway coven, eventually did initiate Sanders. Later that year, Sanders visited Gerald Gardner in the Isle of Man. Gardner (1884–1964) was a retired civil servant who is said to have been largely responsible for the revival of modern witchcraft in Britain. The old man is said to have given Sanders a copy, or allowed him to make a copy, of the witches' 'bible', *The Book of Shadows*. Although it had been compiled by Gardener and the Brighton-based witch, Doreen Valiente, Sanders later claimed it as his own composition.

Around this period, Sanders had been working as an odd-job man at the John Rylands Library in Manchester. But in 1962 he got into trouble with his employers, who called in the police when it was discovered that a copy of the magical grimoire, *The Key of Solomon*, was missing. According to Sanders, he had been "borrowing" a few

pages of the book at a time and having them photocopied. He returned the book — now virtually ruined by having been dismantled — and was fired. However, no charges were brought against him. What is ridiculous about the case is that the self professed hereditary witch could easily have legitimately borrowed a copy of the book — an English translation by Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers, one-time head of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, was available at any decent library at the time.

In 1965 Sanders ‘married’ Maxine Morris, in a witches’ ‘hand-fasting’ ceremony at Alderley Edge, Cheshire. Even then, Sanders was hungry for publicity — and got it. Without Maxine’s knowledge, Sanders tipped off local newspapers that a witchcraft ritual was going to take place. It wasn’t until the next day, when she saw photographs of herself and other members of Sanders’ coven, dancing in the nude, that she realised her ‘husband’ had played a devious trick on her. But Sanders didn’t care — it was the publicity and notoriety that he wanted.

Two years later, Sanders and Maxine were married in a civil ceremony, after they had moved to London. That same year, 1967, Sanders was “technical adviser” of a film, *Eye of the Devil*. It starred David Niven, Deborah Kerr, Emlyn Williams, Flora Robson, Donald Pleasance, David Hemmings, the ill-fated Sharon Tate and John Le Mesurier. Though why Sanders should have been consulted remains something of a mystery. The film owes more to Sir James G. Frazer’s main thesis in his monumental work *The Golden Bough* — the concept of the divine and dying god, a leader who is ritually sacrificed to ensure the continued fertility of the land and the race.

In the film, Niven is executed by an arrow, a la William Rufus in the New Forest, Hampshire. The reason is that Niven’s French vineyard crops have failed.

Many modern witches have somehow allied themselves to this general idea, and there persists a tradition that there has existed a witch tradition in the New Forest for many centuries. William Rufus, King William II of England, born about 1060, was reputed by those who subscribe to this notion, to have been the head of a coven. He is said to have been killed by an arrow while hunting in the New Forest on August 2, 1100. The arrow is supposed by some to have been fired by the king’s armourer, Walter Tyrrell (or Tirel); it glanced off a tree and struck William in the heart.

However, there is a strong possibility that William, a hated tyrant, was the victim of an assassination plot. Tyrrell swore he did not

fire the fatal arrow but nevertheless fled to Picardy immediately after the king's death. Significantly, perhaps, Tyrrell's lands were not confiscated and his in-laws became court favourites.

Around the time I met Sanders — 1970 — he again appeared on television, on the then-popular Simon Dee Show. Also a guest on the show was the author Dennis Wheatley. Predictably, Sanders swept on in a voluminous cape, wearing a crux ansata pendant and a pentagram ring, which he told me had once belonged to the 19th century French magus, Eliphas Levi.

One of the show's writers later told me that Wheatley was "terrified" of Sanders and had as little to do with him as possible, except for joining in the discussion on the show. During it, Sanders produced a wax image which he called a "fith-faith", and proceeded to stick pins in it. He announced that the image had been consecrated to represent a man named Charles Pace, with whom Sanders had had some sort of dispute. Twisting the pin around in the location of the image's heart, Sanders said: "He will have a heart attack now."

Questioned if he thought such a grotesque performance could actually work, Wheatley said he thought that it was highly possible.

It didn't. Pace lived on to write a number of articles for *The News of the World*, in which he made his own verbal attack on Sanders. Pace himself, however, was something of a fantasizer. I gather that, at some time, he had been on friendlier terms with Sanders, because at his London flat, Sanders showed me a manuscript prepared by Pace. It purported to be *The Necronominon* [sic] — a totally fictional work, invented by the horror writer H.P. Lovecraft, who actually called it *The Necronomicon*. Pace's work was one of the most amateurish forgeries I have ever seen — something between a comic book and a child's crayoning book.

And while we're on the subject of setting a few details straight, let me deal with Sanders' "fith-fath". It is, in fact, a Gaelic expression, pronounced "fee-fa" and signifies an enchantment of a person's sight, so that they either see things other than as they really are, or don't see them at all. The occultist Lewis Spence, in *The Magic Arts in Celtic Britain*, says that Scottish witches made themselves invisible in this way. The proper term for a witch's image of someone is *corp creidh* — "clay body".

Another and even more glaring blunder committed by Sanders came in a magazine, the first and only issue of which appeared in the 1970's. In the magazine, called simply *Witch*, the leading article is

headed: KING OF WITCHES PREDICTS: "Prince Charles Will Marry An American".

Sanders' prediction was based on a layout of Tarot cards, which he said "also indicated that the girl will come from a part of the United States associated with corn or wheatland."

Alex Sanders died, a lonely man, of cancer, near Hastings, East Sussex, in May 1988. He was 63 (although one magazine clipping I have in my files has him as 67 in 1984).

Around 150 witches attended his funeral at Hastings Crematorium on Wednesday May 11th, 1988. But even with his death, the controversy that in life he encouraged to surround him, continued. First off, he was cremated because it was feared that some of his more zealous followers might otherwise try to steal bones from his grave. Secondly, there were complaints from some of the witches because the funeral service was essentially Christian. Sanders' ex-wife Maxine — they were divorced in 1973 — had since become a member of the Liberal Catholic Church. White witch Aisslen Lester recited a version of the Lord's Prayer, a Biblical blessing and a reading from Proverbs. But perhaps even more in the Sanders' stamp, a "sinister hooded figure" was noticed — and photographed — at the funeral. Some speculated it was Sander's spirit, there to curse the mourners for giving him a Christian send-off.

Even that was not the end. Six days before he died, Sanders signed a document to the effect that he wanted his 16-year-old son, Victor, to succeed him as Witch King.

The last I heard, Victor had fled Britain to go to the United States, to escape the inevitable in-fighting over the succession.

Three weeks after his death, the outrageous *Sunday Sport* newspaper published a centre-page spread about Sanders. Apparently, Sanders had once asked members of his coven: "Have you ever fucked a fish? If you haven't I suggest you buy a big one and try it."

This cryptic comment, the report revealed, was the only allusion to yet another of Sanders' bizarre secrets: that for seven years he lived with and made love to a mermaid he had conjured up.

Sanders would have loved it...every whacky minute of it.



## Last of The Literary Taboo Breakers Paul Anthony-Woods

At first glance, Savoy Books of Manchester seem unlikely material for a literary *cause célèbre*. Long reviled by their local constabulary for stocking erotica and softcore porn, they have also been responsible for a series of sex 'n' violence laden comic books. Lord Horror, their icon of amorality, made a simultaneous debut in both a novel and his own comic book. Kris Guidio's sleaze-dripping graphics presented an orgiastic, ultra-violent world populated with celebrity figures, from Jessie Matthews to James Joyce, Hitler to The Cramps.

Their record label has puked out an evermore irreverent series of covers of rock's sacred cows. Many, like their take on New Order's *Blue Monday*, are credited under deliberately provocative names, like the Savoy Hitler Youth Band. Most of these sacred cows get stylishly slaughtered by faded '60's superstar P.J. Proby (ask your parents — a beefcake crooner pitched somewhere near Elvis and looking not unlike the young Jim Morrison, had a penchant for splitting his trousers and showing his balls). His deranged crooning has turned *Love Will Tear Us Apart*, Bowie's *Heroes*, *Tainted Love* and Phil Collins' *In The Air Tonight* into booze-fuelled psychodramas. Wonderful stuff. The producer of Jonathan Ross's old show was so impressed by him he sent the following message to Savoy in 1987:

"P.J. Proby is too rock 'n' roll for *The Last Resort*. We're trying to get Tom Jones, who's safer. The only way Proby will get on our show is when he's dead. Bring us his corpse, then we'll put him on."

As their track record suggests, Savoy have been consistently catholic in a way that would make the Pope toss his blinies. If this wilful isolation from the mainstream has drawn much enmity, it has also attracted support (very little of it unreserved, admittedly) for their surrealist-science fiction novel, *Lord Horror* by David Britton. Ironically, it is this very piece which has also caused a small but vocal group of public figures to call for their blood.

In August of 1991, Stipendiary Magistrate Derek Fairclough took the unusual step, at Manchester Magistrates Court, of declaring *Lord Horror* obscene under Section Three of the Obscene Publications Act. As staunch liberal QC Geoffrey Robertson (defender of the *Oz* 'Schoolkids' issue and Niggaz With Attitude, to jump two decades) pointed out, in an appeal hearing almost one year after the initial judgement, this section of the act is only ever used against "ideologically vapid trash". Much was made by Savoy's original defence lawyer of the fact that this was the first time since Selby's *Last Exit To Brooklyn* that a genuine literary work had been deemed obscene in Britain. It cut no ice with the law. *Lord Horror* was, after all, confiscated during a raid on one of Savoy's shops, which also netted a certain amount of erotic publications and videos. During the appeal hearing, solicitor Ian Lewis admitted that the novel (along with *Meng & Ecker*, a related comic book) had been netted alongside many other works of much baser appeal.

By this, we're talking porn, of course (apparently softcore, pornography itself not being intrinsically illegal). Once again, Savoy proved too eclectic an animal to define, all that Sex 'n' SF 'n' Rock 'n' Roll under one roof. It's a strange brew that the Manchester police are none too keen on, and they've been letting Savoy know since the very early '80's.

In the days when God's own emissary to the law enforcement business, Chief Constable James Anderton, was running the show, Savoy notched up an impressive tally of about sixty raids. "There was a period when our shops were being raided every other week," remembers Savoy director Mike Butterworth. In the autumn of 1980, a police raid utilising about 25 uniformed officers swooped on all the Savoy outlets. Among the mass of material confiscated, seven softcore erotic titles were found to be obscene at the subsequent trial. Titles such as *No Place For a Lady*, *Mama Liz Tastes Flesh* and *Secret Sisterhood*, available quite legally in other bookshops around the country at that time. Many of the 'dirty seven' were published by respected American publishers Grove Press, whom Butterworth contacted for a statement of support, to be met by a resounding silence. Nineteen months later, Butterworth and David Britton stood trial on a charge of selling obscene material for gain. Both pleaded guilty, as recommended by their defence lawyer, and Britton was rewarded with a 28-day prison sentence by presiding Judge Hardy. Britton recalls that even the guards who escorted him to the cells were appalled at the severity of the sentence.

Among the many books confiscated (but not prosecuted) were *Tides Of Lust* and *The Gas*, both published by Savoy. *Tides Of Lust* is

a purely erotic work by gay, black science fiction writer Samuel R. Delaney. *The Gas*, by Charles Platt, is more representative of the type of SF Delaney is associated with — mildly outrageous, with a strong streak of eroticism and social satire. Of course, people who think in manichean, black & white terms, such as the police, may find it hard to accept that any work of erotica may have literary value, let alone be a work of genuinely imaginative fiction.

The kneejerk, Pavlovian response to anything which challenges this view continues to dog Savoy, as is illustrated by the seizure of *Lord Horror* — a novel which Colin Wilson calls “an exercise in surrealism (that) compares with some of the best work that came out of France and Germany between the wars, for example Georges Bataille.”

These days, Chief Constable Anderton has gone, but the holy crusade he instigated continues.

At the recent appeal hearing, Ian Lewis stressed that the erotic material was kept in a sealed-off section of the shop, whereas both the novel and the comic were on open sale among items that came mostly from the science fiction genre. What actually constituted ‘obscenity’ in this case was an immediate bone of contention. The novel contains no explicit sex, and its violence, though appalling, is well within the parameters kicked at by literary bloodfests such as *American Psycho*. Instead, the magistrate’s ruling was justified by charges of anti-semitism, a much harder aspect to defend. Very few of the great and good are likely to rally to the cause of free speech for the venomous and bigoted.

All the same, the charge was an incongruity — the Race Relations Act is already in statute to allow the prosecution of those who publish material designed to stir up racial hatred. The novel was sent by the police to the Director of Public Prosecutions, who declined to take action. This is unsurprising, according to author Britton and publisher/editor Butterworth — Butterworth claims their intentions were anything but to cause racial tension, while Britton testifies he is of half-Jewish parentage (only a few steps from saying “some of my best friends are...”, perhaps). To understand the controversy the novel has caused, it becomes necessary to step into its nightmare world.

Horror, the malevolent anti-hero, is a mythic recreation of “Lord Haw-Haw”, alias William Joyce, the wartime traitor hanged in 1946 for his infamous ‘Germany Calling’ radio broadcasts. The novel concerns his post-war search for Der Fuhrer. Hitler, like his disciple, is now adrift in a surreal, post-modern world where art collides viscerally

with trash culture and creates a world of insanity and anachronism. Both figures are pursued by M. Future Time, a French airman who appears to have stepped straight from an old pulp magazine. Future Time's purpose is to reflect the lunacy of the main characters onto a screen of relative sanity.

"It is not mere chance that Hitler, like his predecessor Wilhelm II, was an enthusiastic disciple of 'kitsch'," he informs us, inferring that the rise to prominence of this basically absurd figure was a triumph for philistinism. But Hitler is shown to have pretensions. During one of the novel's discourses on art and philosophy, which frequently interrupt the surreal and ultra-violent narrative, Der Fuhrer namedrops the artists Paul Klee and Marcel Duchamp, Schopenhauer, and, inevitably, the much-misinterpreted Nietzsche. The reader may be reminded, at this point, that the artistic iconoclasts of the early 20th century were often every bit as reactionary in their attitudes as they were radical in their works — Dali's support of Franco; Pound's lionisation of the Italian fascists; Celine's insane love of the Nazi occupation, which made his brave treatment of Jewish patients so much more dangerously perverse.

Just as Hitler's pontificating starts to wear, up pops Old Shatterhand, his giant, autonomous penis, to bite him in the arse. At the appeal hearing of 30 July, 1992, opinions were divided as to just what the anthropomorphised dick was supposed to represent. Geoffrey Robertson, for the defence, claimed that its presence showed Hitler to be a ludicrous, grotesque figure, much in keeping with the novel's tone. Expert witness Michael Moorcock, prolific SF author and '60's radical turned '90's liberal, testified to his twenty-year involvement with Savoy (they published an early graphic novel version of his *The Jewel In The Skull*, almost published his novel *The Brothel In Rozenstrasse* before going temporarily bankrupt due to the '80's obscenity case, and have just issued *Death Is No Obstacle*, a book-length interview/overview of his career). In his opinion, Shatterhand was a symbol of "the beast within man". This seemed to be accepted by the court, until the reading of a passage where the phallic beast ejaculates over precious manuscripts by Schopenhauer and Wittgenstein.

"What is the purpose of this?" asked presiding Judge Gerard Humphries.

Robertson replied that it was a statement about Hitler's shallow attempt to weave together an ideology. No-one said satire had to be subtle.

What Shatterhand most readily brings to mind is Steely Dan, the atom-powered dildo created by William S. Burroughs. Butterworth,

speaking both on his own behalf and for the publicity-shy Britton, acknowledges their deep debt to Wild Bill. When Hitler is tracked down by Horror, he has become a mugwump, one of the mis-shapen creatures featured in *The Naked Lunch*. In fact, the whole book is best described as being in the dystopian post-'60's mode of science fiction begun by Burroughs, Ballard and Ellison.

Brian Stableford, SF/dark fantasy author and editor of the Dedalus Books of Decadence, told the court that the book "relates to a tradition running from the Decadent and Symbolist fiction of the 1890's, through to the Surrealist movement."

Counsel for the defence kept pursuing the more accessible SF angle, however. The court heard Horror journeys deep into the traditions of pulp fiction, travelling to New York to find the comic artist Burne Hogarth, creator of the Tarzan strips. An analogy was drawn between the verbal depiction of Hogarth's strip cartoon monsters — the Ononoes — "Sharp-mouthed heads without bodies, filled with eternal hatred and genocide" — and the corroded soul of the man Hitler.

Similarly, the fantastic context of the book was said to illustrate the way in which the Jew, the perpetual outsider, has been maligned and distorted in order to create archetypal folk myths — the vampire, the werewolf, all of the creatures defeated by christian, Aryan heroes. Moorcock also felt that the text made an implicit criticism of American 'hard' SF, its Heinleinian fascistic and militaristic themes.

The judge was clearly unimpressed by such allusions. "You're blinding us with science fiction," he complained, enjoying playing up to the role of the common man, expressing ignorance about such luminaries as Kurt Vonnegut.

The sole interest of the court was whether the novel could be said to deprave and corrupt any of the handful of post-mod SF enthusiasts who picked up a copy (with a £10.95 hardback retail price on a short run of 500 they would be few and far between, especially as the police had confiscated 30% of the run). The accusation may sound ridiculous, but some of the passages make for especially uncomfortable reading. In the first chapter of the book, Horror admires his collection of 'body jewellery', made from the corpses of Jewish women. In the chapter entitled *Jewkiller*, there is an unflinchingly nauseating account of Horror assaulting a Jew as his victim leaves a synagogue:

"'God, my face has left me!' the young Jew exclaimed, staring in grim fascination as his left cheek slid away over his chin. He watched

it fall for what seemed an age, until the white flesh flopped idly onto the wet pavement between his feet.”

Nowhere near as graphic as any number of crime books which make the bestseller shelves, but its anti-semitic context is clearly meant to disturb.

The effect of this, according to Robertson, is that Horror and Hitler are seen as “no more than ordinary, banal psychopaths.” Not everyone perceives such satiric intent. *The Jewish Telegraph*, which had (perhaps rather misguidedly) been sent a review copy, initially demanded that legal action be taken. They have since then, Butterworth assures, become more tolerant of Savoy’s actions, realising that the equal degrees of imagination and disgust are used to reveal and attack, rather than applaud and condone. After all, the current conventional wisdom among neo-nazis and Irvingites is that the Holocaust was a fictional spectacle directed by Hitchcock — any work which lingers long on its horrors surely cannot be said to further their cause.

Julie Burchill also added her name to the growing list of objectors, via a guest column in the *Spectator*. When the paperback edition hits the racks, she promises us, she will be out there on the streets, organising violent demos and attacking the police. Obviously, she’s contrasting tolerant Jewish rationalism against the antics of the ‘kill Rushdie’ brigade (and she wrote of the novel’s “barking mad” narrator, indicating that she recognises the context), but some will take her at face value, just as they have the novel itself.

In his argument against the ‘anti-semitic’ tag, Robertson quoted Kafka to the court — “It is the duty of the writer to wield his pen like an icepick, to smash the icy wastes within.” He argued that *Lord Horror* does not exploit its subject matter — “there are no enticing pictures, no swastikas, nothing lurid on the cover, no come-on.” The fact that Savoy, as grown-up children of the pop culture age, have produced visceral comic strips connected to the novel would prove to be a problem. In the novel’s graphic counterpart, the *Hardcore Horror* series, Kris Guidio’s artwork lavishly depicts the grotesquerie and violence that is only glimpsed through the dense language of Britton’s text. By the end of the comic series, as with all its companion pieces, a moral stance finally becomes discernible. New *Horror* artist John Coulthart provides a devastating end to the narrative in *King Horror: Zero* (Britton’s lurid talents now employed on the blackly funny *Meng & Ecker*). “Arbeit Macht Frei” reads the maxim above the gates of Coulthart’s death camp — a place of grim, semi- gothic architecture, derelict machinery, and

broken humanity. Surely the sentiment behind this work is only too apparent, even if most of it is too harrowing to witness?

In stark contrast, the novel's black cover only features quotes from La Bruyere ("All the wit in the world is lost on he who has none" — pre-empting the attack, perhaps?), and the high priest of absurdism, Pirandello ("I think that life is a very sad piece of buffoonery.").

"Unlike the *Sunday Times* publication of Goebbels' diaries," Robertson contended, "this work has no appeal to neo-nazis... No nazi-skinhead type would get past page two. The Holocaust cannot be excluded from the literary imagination on his account." He went on to recount a passage wherein Horror is interrogated as to the whereabouts of his Fuhrer. "What price?" Horror replies. "Surely Hitler is worth something?"

"He certainly is," came the non-fictional retort of Geoffrey Robertson, "as Mr. Murdoch and others have discovered...The book", he announced, "has a discomfiting and challenging message — that Hitler has become a scapegoat for the endemic racism of Europe."

Moorcock agreed. "*Lord Horror*", he said, "is in a tradition of lampoon, of exaggeration. It's purpose is to show up social evils, and the evils within ourselves. The book tries to identify the ways of thinking that led to the Holocaust, and could yet lead to another one."

Of the defence witnesses, only Guy Cumberbatch, Professor of Communications Research at Aston University and contributor to Home Office reports on the effects of mass media, stated he "wouldn't wish to argue that it has social worth regarding informing the people about the Holocaust." He did, however, reject all accusations of implicit anti-semitism and incitement to violence.

Still, give a dog a bad name and it tends to stick. *The Independent*, in its leader of July 31, the day after the trial, referred to the novel as an anti-semitic fantasy, with nothing to indicate that the anti-semitism occurs deep within the context of the work, and is not its guiding philosophy. Though the editorial accepted that *Lord Horror* might just prove an exception, we were further warned that "those who seek greater freedom of expression should realise that they are, by and large, defending the right to publish filth, not works of art."

Accusations of "filth" came closer to home for Savoy regarding the comic *Meng & Ecker*, a second graphic companion piece to the novel (M & E, named after Mengele and Eckhart, are Horror's cronies, his "creep boys", as introduced in the novel). Drawn in Guidio's sleazily explicit style recalling the horror comics of the '50s and the black &

white glossies of the '60s and '70s, such as *Vampirella*, it depicts its main characters as vulgar grotesques, despite M & E bearing satirical resemblances to author Britton and the gaunt Butterworth. They run riot in the local Coffee and Cocaine Rooms, indulge in Paki-bashing, and offer up the flesh of Jews and Asians as fare on their restaurant menu. The targets of the comic are many, having a wild scattergun effect, and the satire is of the sledgehammer variety. But, as Savoy's defence insisted, satire it still is, with a huge surplus of Spitting Imagery.

Referring to the comics, the defence was on much more slippery ground. Stableford referred to Meng & Ecker as grotesques who "spout rhetoric which can be heard on our streets everyday. Placing such rhetoric in the mouths of these characters is condemnatory."

Despite such assured defence, a reference to satirizing characters from the Beano left the abiding impression that comics are still just kid's stuff — trash entertainment for malleable minds.

Moorcock, under questioning by the Crown, replied that he thought "it could be seen as a glamorisation of violence, by someone who didn't know the context."

Through such creditably honest equivocation was a battle part-lost.

After an adjournment, during which the bench decided whether they could put the circumstances of the raid out of their minds (the relevant documents were never intended to be submitted as evidence, being prejudicial to consideration of the book as a singular entity, but copies of the police report had mysteriously turned up in front of the two adjudging magistrates), Robertson tried to impress upon the judge that he was now upholding European standards of free speech.

"Am I to be forced to accept Amsterdam standards?" he protested.

"No, Your Honour," clarified Robertson. "Strasbourg standards."

Slightly perversely, the magistrate's original obscenity verdict on the novel was reversed, while the comic (which inhabits similar disturbing territory) was held to be obscene. "No-one is prepared to read this work unless they are willing to digest large amounts of philosophy and complex argument," announced Judge Humphries. "We give this book no accolade, no approval." But neither did they find it to be obscene.

Little attention was paid during the proceedings to a minor character named Chief Constable James Appleton, who befriends Horror and makes a speech about "Jews swimming in a cesspool of their own making." Not the most controversial detail of the trial, sure.



But consider how often caricatures of Savoy's pious arch-enemy have turned up: an exploding face from the SF/schlock- horror movie *The Stuff* was retouched to resemble Anderton, the words "Fucking suckarse nigger Jew" and "White nazi cunt scum" emanating from its mouth and cranium respectively; the bearded, decapitated head on the cover of *Meng & Ecker No. 1* is also very familiar.

Incitement to anti-semitic hatred is a legitimate concern (though misplaced, in this case), but is this any more offensive to a police force than the constant ridicule of their former leader?

In this light, the whole thing seems to take on the tone of one of those legendary hillbilly feuds, which go on for half a century after everyone's forgotten how the whole thing began.

*Meng & Ecker No. 1* was found to be obscene on the basis that it is "more luridly bound, and is of a far less literary nature. Furthermore, it may be gloated over by individuals who consider violence attractive."

Despite having won a minor victory with the book, Savoy intend to take the entire *Meng & Ecker* series to the court of appeal once again. Should the verdict be upheld, then a new precedent is set: the artistic freedom which is granted to an old perennial, largely respectable medium will not be applied to its more recent descendants. It has grave implications for an evolving artform, not least for Britton and Coulthart's forthcoming *Reverbstorm*, an intense study of the love affair between Lord Horror and Jessie Matthews(!)

Neither is it certain the book will meet with no further opposition. On Radio 4's *Today* programme, on the day after the verdict, Michael Winner, director of the *Death Wish* films and self-appointed guardian of the public conscience, was heard telling Frances D'Souza of freedom of speech/information pressure group Article 19 that *Lord Horror* was exactly the kind of thing that should be banned.

At the end of his address to the court, Robertson gave great prominence to a passage largely written by Butterworth, where Hitler begins to fade from the memory of the universe: "A motionless sargasso of stars suddenly appeared. They seemed so close, the rings off the gems off the fingers of all the dead girls... It took him most of the night to realise they were laughing at him. A few were crying. He felt the vibrations of their laughter shaking him..."

As Robertson emphasised, Hitler is ultimately depicted as "a simple man, laughed at and sometimes cried at — a creature of laughter and tragedy."

# It's A Dog's Life: The Go, Go, Go World of Mondo Movies David Flint

Africa — a screaming child has his foreskin stretched across a rock. He is held securely by members of the tribe, while others gather around to watch. The village witch-doctor raises his knife...then brings it down to sever the flesh. The child screams in pain; behind him, a long line of other little boys tremble in trepidation.

The scenario described above is featured in the film *Shocking Africa* (aka *The Last Savage Pt. 2*), one of the most brutally uncompromising entries in a movie genre that often defies belief — the Mondo Movie.

Mondo Movies are the last word in documentary film-making. They specialise in presenting the most horrific, bizarre, unusual and eccentric acts in the world to an audience that has challenged them: “shock me”. They can range from exposes of sexual taboos, rituals and life-styles, to all-out assaults on the senses with a barrage of death, torture and despair. And it's all real...

Or so they claim. In fact, Mondo Movies quite often aren't entirely real. A few *are* genuine from start to finish; others are entirely staged. Most occupy the middle ground, combining genuine footage with ‘reconstructions’ of those events where the camera didn't arrive in time, or where the filmed reality just isn't ‘real’ enough. But it's the thought that counts, and this desire to bring the worst excesses of humanity to our attention is why Mondo movies are the most reviled, misunderstood and ignored movies in the world.

It's generally considered that the genre began in 1962 with *Mondo Cane*. That, too, is incorrect. In fact, Mondo had been around since the early days of cinema; it just didn't have a name. Many ‘documentaries’ of the silent movie period were entirely staged, and dwelled on sensationalist footage that couldn't be shown in openly

fictitious films. Early movies like *Mau Mau* and *Karamoja* used footage of native tribes drinking animal blood, dancing naked and mutilating their own bodies, while early newsreels such as *The Eruption Of Mount Vesuvius* were crude reconstructions — using model sets — passed off as genuine footage to easily impressed viewers. But *Mondo Cane* not only gave a name to this seemingly unrelated series of films, but also set the standards by which all subsequent ‘shockumentaries’ (as some critics called them) would be measured. Some thirty years after it first appeared before astonished audiences, the film remains example of the genre.

*Mondo Cane* takes the viewer on a roller-coaster ride through the wild side of life. Whether it be religious fanatics washing clean church steps with their increasingly bloody tongues, a group of Valentino look-a-likes hoping to be discovered as the next movie idol, natives worshipping cargo planes or strippers going through the motions, it was a revelation to the world’s public, who in 1962 were still only just getting used to the idea of bare breasts in nudie films. Even more shocking was the animal cruelty. It was the scenes of animal abuse — particularly that to domesticated animals like dogs — which caused the British censor to ban the film outright, thus setting another precedent for the genre: for thirty years, mondo movies have been the most consistently problematic film genre outside pornography for censors in Britain.

Despite — or because of — the controversy surrounding the film, *Mondo Cane* cleaned up at the box office internationally. Its theme tune, *More* by Riz Ortolani (the mondo composer) was even nominated for an Oscar. Not only was a sequel inevitable, but a flood of imitators sprang up all over the world.

In fact, 1963 saw two ‘sequels’ to *Mondo Cane*. Not only did Gualtiero Jacopetti and Franco Prosperi follow up their original hit with *Mondo Cane 2* (aka *Mondo Pazzo*), they also used leftover footage to make *Women Of The World*, as somewhat less excessive instalment, narrated by Peter Ustinov. Also in 1963 came *Taboos Of The World* (narrator — Vincent Price), *Ecco* (narrator — George Sanders) and a glut of lesser known films, mainly from Italy, but with a few being made in the USA and Japan (where mondo films have been consistently popular since the sixties). The flood continued for the next few years. From the US came *Kwaheri* — *Vanishing Africa*, where we spent the whole film in eager anticipation of “the forbidden

skull operation". When it came, we weren't disappointed. Using no anaesthetic, the local witchdoctor would carve open the top of the patient's head, then chisel out a piece of skull, while the camera silently recorded it in grainily authentic style.

*Go, Go, Go World* was another Italian film, which had all the prerequisite elements of a classic mondo, but failed because of the dreadful narration. The narration of a mondo film is vitally important — the success or failure of the movie depends as much upon the soundtrack as the visuals. The narration should ideally be slightly cynical, but generally restrained, with the narrator knowing when to get serious — in *Go, Go, Go World*, the cynicism was overbearing. The narrator sneers at practically everything, leaving the viewer feeling as offended as the subjects would undoubtedly be.

From Britain came *London In The Raw* and its sequel *Primitive London*, which mixed mocking observations of "swinging London" with chickens being slaughtered (which the BBFC thought was acceptable), and other archetypal, if watered down, mondo material. The best parts of the films, though, were the splendidly tacky strippers (we follow one Northern lass as she hurries from strip joint to strip joint, performing a pitifully tame act at each), girls sitting in bathtubs to shrink their jeans, wifeswapping parties, and other aspects of the "permissive" society that seem unbearably sweet and innocent by today's standards.

By the second half of the sixties, the market for the mondo film had decreased somewhat in America. European and Japanese sales remained high, but as most of the Italian films had been produced with one eye firmly on US sales, the genre production line slowed down somewhat. Jacopetti and Prosperi didn't flag though. In 1966 they made their most brutal work, one which was to set the tone for many of the out and out mondo movies that followed in the seventies. *Africa Addio* was a long, uncompromising look at the nightmare situation afflicting much of that continent in the sixties. With civil war erupting all around them, the two Italians abandoned plans for another *Mondo Cane* style study of bizarre life-styles and odd behaviour, and instead came away with a stunning, savage, bloodsoaked film. Gone was the cynical narration — in its place was the voice of despair. There is no hope in *Africa Addio*. The film is full of death. Animals are massacred, humans beaten, shot, mutilated and executed. Utterly apocalyptic, the film divided critics. Some admired it as an indictment of human

madness. Others, unable to forget the filmmakers' previous work, slammed it as an exploitative orgy of sadism. The film was a box office failure, and sank from view for years. A few years later, it re-emerged as *Africa Blood And Guts*, with an hour cut from it. All the atrocities were left in, but without the footage showing their historical and political background, the film indeed lived up to its detractors' description.

*Africa Addio* saw the end of the domination of the *Mondo Cane* spirit in the mondo field. Although a steady stream of similar productions continued to appear during the seventies and eighties, from now on, the genre would be a more diverse one. Many mondo movies would concentrate on specific subjects, rather than take an all-embracing look at the world. This was nothing new — before *Mondo Cane*, there had been many nudist 'documentaries', made primarily as an excuse to get naked bodies on screen in the days when any such images were otherwise forbidden. African safari films had also long been popular. But in the late sixties, and in the two subsequent decades, more and more exploitative, sensational, bizarre documentaries were to appear that dealt with one specific aspect of — as one British mondo of the sixties called it — *Our Incredible World*.

A number of the mondo films of the late sixties investigated the hippy movement. This was partly to pull in the young crowd, and partly to cater to sensation seeking older audiences, who were turned on by stories of free love, drug crazed orgies and rampant nakedness. *The Hippy Revolt* (aka *The World Of Acid*) featured various members of the Love generation talking about their lives. *Like It Is* followed the same format, but aimed itself at the skinflick crowd. In this film, the hippies spend most of their time naked. It also features "recreations" of acid trips. A good trip, according to this film, consists of visions of flashing lights and naked girls, while a bad trip causes visions of flying skulls and, you guessed it, naked girls. Other youth culture mondos of the time included *Mondo Teen*, *Mondo Hollywood*, and *Mondo Mod*.

Another prominent new strain of mondo in the late sixties and early seventies was the sex education film. Throughout the sixties, the restrictions over what could be depicted on screen had been steadily eroded. Now, enterprising film-makers realised that you could get away with showing hard-core sex action if it was presented as being educational. The first to appear was *Man & Wife*, directed by Matt Cimber, best known as the one time husband of Jayne Mansfield, and

later to direct movies as diverse as the remarkable horror film *The Witch Who Came From The Sea* and the dreadful *Butterfly*, which launched an adult Pia Zadora onto the world. Others soon followed, including *The Art Of Marriage*, *The Sensuous Female*, *Sexual Freedom In Marriage*, et al. Variations on the theme were documentaries about censorship in countries where pornography was legal. The best known of these was *Censorship In Denmark — A New Approach*, in which Alex De Renzy — later to make straightforward porn films like *Babyface* and *Pretty Peaches* — filmed a sex convention, and aimed his camera at the screen during a showing of a pornographic film. He was therefore not shooting porn himself, but simply reporting on its existence elsewhere. De Renzy also made *A History Of The Blue Movie*, which collected vintage stag movies together as a documentary on the development of porn film-making. Both scams worked — he avoided arrest, money flooded in and imitations flooded forth for the next couple of years, until the release of *Deep Throat* negated the need for such disguises. Of course, this legal escape clause has been revived in Britain recently, with films like *The Lovers' Guide* using the 'educational' tag to justify putting hard-core sex on sale legally.

Other countries also entered the sex education field. The genre was particularly popular in West Germany, where a whole slew of soft-core soap operas with medical information thrust inbetween scenes appeared. Best known of these was *Helga*, which culminated in a real birth (something which had been done by American mavericks in the forties with films like *Mom & Dad*). A bunch of others came from sexologist Oswalt Kolle. These eventually evolved into the long running *Schoolgirl Report* series (not to mention *Housewife Reports* and others) in which the usual soft sex scenes were interspersed with genuine street interviews with teenage girls talking about sex — thus giving the movie an air of educational legitimacy. Rather better were a couple of serious, and explicit, Swedish documentaries, *The Language Of Love 1* and *2*. The first film was banned by the BBFC, but passed by the GLC for London audiences. Outraged right-wingers took the film to court on obscenity charges, where it was acquitted. In the light of that decision, the BBFC finally approved a cut version, but this didn't stop them from refusing the second film a few years later. Both titles are now on video.

Meanwhile, the traditional mondo movie had continued to appear now and again. *Brutes And Savages*, which is best known for showing a ludicrously fake crocodile attack, Jacopetti and Prosperi's

*Farewell Uncle Tom*, and *Mondo Magic* all emerged in the early seventies, and all confirmed that the mondo movie was now a far more savage affair than had been the case in the early sixties. Even more confirmation came in the form of *Of The Dead*, a thoroughly downbeat and unsettling view of death, which featured autopsy footage and executions amongst more sober examinations of how people face up to the final curtain. Sensation seekers were still being served, though. As the decade neared its half-way point, three films were released that took the *Mondo Cane* attitude to new extremes. Freed from the shackles of censorship that had restricted their sixties rivals, *This Is America*, *Shocking Asia* and *Shocking Asia II* wallowed in depravity, concentrating on eye-popping scenes of sex madness. *Shocking Asia* is best known for the grim footage of sex change surgery, while *This Is America* seems to have sought out every sexual eccentric in the country to put before a bemused audience (needless to say, they hadn't, and the film spawned two sequels, had its footage reworked as *The Sex Maniacs Guide To The Usa*, and provided stock footage for all director Romano Vanderbes' subsequent fictional films).

By the mid-seventies, documentaries predicting the end of the world, or examining strange phenomena, were all the rage. Orson Welles hosted both *The Late Great Planet Earth* and *The Man Who Saw Tomorrow* (about Nostrodamus), while others included *Mysteries Of The Gods*, *Alien Mysteries*, *Aliens From Spaceship Earth*, *Beyond And Back* and a host of others. The best was *Journey Into The Beyond*, a frantic and intriguing look at all manner of unnatural phenomena. Natural disasters came into vogue as the disaster movie craze scored big at the box office. William Conrad narrated *Catastrophe*, while the ever-reliable Vincent Price fronted *Days Of Fury*. Even TV got in on the act, with *Havoc*, in which air disasters, motorway pile-ups and earthquakes were dished up in bite sized thirty minute chunks for a sensation-hungry public.

The mid seventies also saw the emergence of the porn star documentary, beginning with *Inside Marilyn Chambers*. These hard-core films purported to be an inside look at the lives of their subjects, though in reality, they consisted of the star discussing her sex life, with filmed 'reconstructions' of the highlights. Nevertheless, the genre proved popular into the eighties.

1978 saw the release of *Faces Of Death*. The film came and went at theatres without being noticed, though it was a massive hit in

Japan. It was on video that the film gained its reputation. Released at a time when horror movies were becoming ever more violent, when the 'gore-hound' mentality was first emerging, and when very few other mondo movies were available on video, the film was a massive hit. In Britain, it was released minus twenty or so minutes (not due to censorship, but rather because the distributors thought it was too long!), and soon ended up on the list of banned 'nasties'. Two sequels followed: *Faces Of Death 2* is probably the most valid of the series, simply because it has less fake footage than the others. *Faces Of Death 3*, on the other hand, is almost entirely staged.

It was thought that the series had ended with the release of the third film. But despite the outrage of various groups, and the video distributors disowning the films, the series refused to die. One cheap-skate video distributor cobbled together a bunch of public domain accident and operation clips, and released it as *Faces Of Death 4*, before a lawsuit made them change the title to *Death Faces*. In 1990, though, a German producer made an official *Faces Of Death 4*. Again directed by Conan Le Cilaire (auteur of the first three), this made the previous movies look like works of art. It's a mess, totally unwatchable and completely faked. It must have made money, though, as the distributors have followed up with *Faces Of Death 5* and *Faces Of Death 6*, both minus Le Cilaire.

Other key mondo titles of the late seventies included Doris Wishman's eye-popping *Let Me Die A Woman*, which explored the trans-sexual phenomenon, and a trio of Italian classics — *Savage Man Savage Beast*, *Shocking Africa* and *This Violent World*. All three contained some truly horrifying footage, and all three were skilfully constructed and highly intelligent. *This Violent World*, in particular, is probably the best archetypal mondo movie since *Mondo Cane*.

The Eighties saw a revival of interest in mondo movies. As more and more people began to seek out different forms of film-making, and video companies sought ultra-violent material to satiate the horror movie fans blood-lust, so many of the classic mondos began to find a new audience. 1981 saw *Sweet And Savage*, another great film from the makers of *Savage Man Save Beast* and *Shocking Africa*. The same year brought us *The Killing Of America*, a downbeat look at violence, featuring assassination footage, interviews with serial killers and various gun crazed maniacs battling it out with police. Although one of the most highly regarded mondo films in Europe, the movie



flopped in America — a little too close to the truth for comfort, perhaps.

The Eighties also saw the rise of video production, making it possible for small interest films to be made economically. A whole bunch of specialist mondo movies began to emerge. Nudist films — this time actually made for nudists — reappeared, and others dealt with tattooing and body piercing. Many mondos were made for the girlie market, with documentaries about strippers, wet T-shirt contests, nude modelling, etc. Among the more notable were *Stripper* (one of the few shot for theatrical release), and *How To Fill A Wild Wet T-shirt*. Others aimed their sights at the death trippers, and tapes like *News Nightmares*, *Death Scenes* (narrated by Anton LaVey) etc. used uncensored TV news footage or police photographs of murder victims.

Rip-offs were plentiful, too: tapes like *Faces Of Torture* and *Inhumanities* used badly copied footage from other movies, randomly thrown together and sold as all new mondos to gullible splatter fanatics.

Theatrically, *Addio Ultimo Uomo* took the violent mondo as far as it could go. Many viewers, used to extreme material, reported being sickened by the constant catalogue of atrocities contained in the film. Rather more palatable was *Dances Sacred & Profane*, in which photographer Charles Gatewood examines the world of body art. Much of the film concentrates on Fakir Mustafar, who recreates various tribal manhood rituals. Gatewood is also responsible for the *Weird* series, which studies bizarre (mostly sexual) characters and events in different cities across America and the rest of the world.

The word "mondo" also began to come back into vogue. *Mondo New York* was a look at many of the performance artists living in that city; *Mondo Sexualis USA* is an unseen study of wild sexuality. From Italy came *Mondo Cane 2000*, which was reasonably good, and featured plenty of sensationalist footage, but is hardly worthy of the name 'Mondo Cane'. Neither Jacopetti nor Prosperi were involved.

The Nineties look set to a boom period for the mondo movie, although not in its traditional form. Rather, more and more specialist material is appearing on tape. Crime buffs can thrill to documentaries about Charles Manson, Ed Gein, Ted Bundy and other popular serial killers. Nudist enthusiasts have a whole range of films available, as do transvestites, body artists and fetishists. Porn star interview tapes continue to be successful, and collections of starlet screen-tests are

highly popular. With such a plethora of specialist material being available, the market for a modern day version of *Mondo Cane* would be seriously reduced. Instead, viewers will have to content themselves with the vintage productions, and stock up on their modern day offshoots. These films might be wildly varied in subject matter and intent; their artistic and technical qualities may differ considerably; but they do have one thing in common. They all tell us things that we don't know. They offer us a look at a forbidden, secret side of life, taking us on a world wide trip through the mores and madness of modern life. They serve as a document of how we live, seen from a permanently cynical viewpoint. They take a slice of society and thrust it in our faces. More so than any 'straight' documentary, the mondo film — in its many and varied forms — is a potent tool of information. For that reason alone, they deserve to be applauded, not condemned. After all, no matter how shocking they may be, they only reflect reality, and if they cause offence, we must look to ourselves to make the change in the life-styles they present.

## What it's like to be a Neoist

### Istvan Kantor

“I didn’t want what happened to me to happen.  
NEOISM?! was given to me.  
A gift from God or the devil,  
but something I didn’t want.”  
a Monty Cantsin

I was 9 years old when I wrote *The Immortal Cowboy*, a western type fiction inspired by the books of Cooper and Carl May.

At the age of 19 I wrote a play, *The Secret of Immortality*, an absurd comedy in which the ‘Master’, “a great artist”, reveals the secret of his long life and successful career: He urinates in the bath since childhood.

In 1967 I discovered a mass grave, near the State Hospital in Budapest and collected a bunch of skulls and boxes of bones.

In July, 1978, in Portland, Oregon I found an amazingly strange object, something like a lamp, which I haven’t been able to identify and called it “Portland UFO”. It is the fundamental inspirational object of NEOISM?!.

Once my teacher sent me home from school to change shoes because he didn’t like the ones I was wearing. I had decorated them with flowers and slogans such as “Tat Ivam Asi” (you are me), “Amo amari ama”, (if you want to be loved, love). At home I put on my beatnik boots, but before I could leave the house my mother came back and demanded I change them because “these are not for school”. So finally I left in a pair of shiny black shoes, but, in the street, since it was really warm, I took them off and continued bare foot. Before I reached the next corner a policeman stopped me and ordered me to put them on. Back in school my teacher said that my new shoes were too elegant and he would rather see me bare foot.

Between 1967 and ’69, before beginning my medical studies, for a while I was working as a sick and dead carrier and later I became



*Istvan Kantor (Photo: Anne-Marie Tremblay)*

a nurse. Ten years later in Montreal, in Sept 1977, I got a job in a sheepskin manufacturer as a cutter. In this period of immigration I also experienced dishwashing, office cleaning and later I became a machine operator in the "Plastic Brain Factory" (named by me from the brain looking plastic waste).

My first band had been the 'Trogerek' (from the German word "trogen", a "troger" is a heavy worker, usually underpaid, unrespected).

Later it became 'Hivok' (The Believers), still in highschool years. Then came the infamous 'Drazse Express' neo-dada anti-music group, from 1968 to 1972. Meanwhile I also had my one-man band 'Pop Kantor'. In 1973 I formed 'Kantor Inform', an urban-folk/political song trio. In 1976 in Paris I became a lonely subway-singer but a few months later I reorganized 'Kantor Inform Budapest-Paris'.

In 1978 I formed THE MONTY CANTSIN'S INTERNATIONAL STREET MYTH BLUES BAND with David Zack and Eric Stewart, in Portland. There I also played with Smegma and did solo acts under the names of Kantor Inform, Bertolt Bartok and Monty Cantsin.

From 1979 to 1982 I had no band, however I collaborated with Lion Lazer, Bill Vorn (Rational Youth), Tristan Renaud and other musicians.

In 1982 I formed 'Flaming Neoists' which later became 'First Aid Brigade'. After disbanding F.A.B. in 1984 I decided to stay solo. Only a few years later in New York I have been able to start a new band with D.J. Steve, called 'Hungarian Folk Music'. We developed our own scrapmetal-propaganda style and still continue in this direction. Recently, in 1990, I formed a new band in Montreal, 'NOMEN EST OMEN', from members of Phycus, the Neoist Machine Group.

Between 1972 and '75 things were more confusing than ever.

As a result of my artistic ambitions and my participation at illegal political manifestations I dropped out from the university. In fact this was the only way to avoid to become a toy in the hands of the authorities.

My nervous system developed a claustrophobic syndrome. I couldn't stay on a bus for more than 5 minutes. It took me a lot of wine, beer, brandy and valium to suppress my erupting rage. I escaped to the country and spent a lot of time with fishing, yoga, daydreaming, love.

I fell in love for the first time at age 12 and since then I haven't been able to recover. I have gone through many experiences and I consider love to be the cause of everything, including Neoism?!

The history of Neoism?! is a love story. Love is a burning, bleeding, flaming, singing, flying, dancing, fucking monster.

In 1982 I was travelling in North America and in Europe carrying my own, life size, gold bust. Often it was the only thing I carried with me.

It was a great object with which to produce cinematic conversations with border inspectors, to increase my self-confidence and to enhance my reputation.

Some people, without a sense of absurd humour, criticised me for being extremely egotistic, self-admiring, or completely mad.

Between 1983 and '85 I kept six white rats in my apartment. They became permanent participants of neoist?! events, performances, concerts, ceremonies, exhibitions.

I immortalized their life and death in a super8 movie, entitled *Rat Life*. They travelled with us on shorter trips. When they died I skinned them, and produced a special *Rat Smile* issue of their hides.

In 1984, during a long and continuous trip across Europe and Canada I produced a film in which I'm wearing a fish hat. Though I changed 'hats' a few times (from Surany, Hungary to Atnabasca, Columbia Icefield, Canada) I tried to keep each one as long as I could because often it was difficult to find the same kind of fish (carp) in different countries.

In the warm weather (May-July) it was a challenging experience to travel with a rotten dead fish in my suitcase, or on my head.

At age 3 I named myself *Red Spotty*. I was 13 when I started to sign my songs *Francesco Stephanus Kantore*. For a while I called myself *Cso!* (pronounce Tshio, means tube, pipe, but it also became a word for greeting among my friends). Names and titles were always essential for me. David Zack proposed me *Monty Cantsin* in 1977. Another one I really like to use is (-e). My newest name is Amen, since 1990). My office, Neoist Research Center, 1980-82, at Venicule Art, Montreal, was smaller than my bathroom but we caused more problem to the six storey building than anyone else (not talking about the troubles we caused to the world).

In 1986 I installed a new office, the 'Neoist Headquarters' in New York City, and declared myself "self appointed leader of the people of the Lower East Side". I joined the Rivington School and became the School's spokesman. The School's slogan is "make shit happen" and that's pretty much what we do. Our events are the greatest flops and failures.

In 1989 I joined the Overnational Socialist Party and formed the Neoist Front to assist the Party's aims and objectives.

Things are happening very fast. Since Jan. 1st, 1990 I almost died three times, I made at least five new blood paintings, I wrote three books, led a few victorious revolutions, fell in love 100 times, ran the marathon twice, gave birth to a couple of twins, moved to Mongolia and back, got robbed, killed and reincarnated, got married, separated and divorced, declared war...

The purpose of Neoism?! always has been "to get away from the prison of art" and "to create open situations" (see Love Letter, 1979, the very first manifesto of Neoism?!).

**How to explain Neoism?! to hotel detectives, museum directors, secret agents, or why inspectors and policemen are so interested to learn about Monty Cantsin?**

—extracts from *The Blood Campaign Diary*—

*June 11, 1978, Mirabel Airport, Montreal*

I'm going to Portland (Ore) to meet David. Two years ago, while he was travelling in Europe, he visited me in Budapest. He emptied his pockets on a white diner table and told me to pick something from the many little objects. I picked this black lobster pin that I'm wearing on my jacket. It was actually a red lobster but I painted it black. Some people thought it looked more like a giant spider. I added a red cross to it and also a sign "NOMENEST OMEN", written with gold nail polish.

An inspector stops me at the US passport checking and leads me to a small office. I have to empty my bag and pockets and place everything on a table. Among the things are a pack of condoms, a can of red spraypaint, a few rubber stamps, my East German camera, vitamins, Monty Cantsin? business cards, notebook, homeless passport, naked bed-in photos of ZsuZsa and me, letters from David, dictionaries, masks, lots of audio cassettes, little pieces of rocks, a bottle of rubber cement, etc...

The inspector seems to be very interested about my whole life, my years in Hungary, in Paris, my reasons of immigration, my profession, my friends, my plans in the United States...

My airplane has already left but I'm still sitting here and answering his questions: "Were you a member of the communist party?", "Have

you been in the army?", "What is your religion?", "What are these rubber stamps for?", "Who is Monty Cantsin?", "Why do you carry red spray-paint with you?", "Who is David Zack?", "Are you a member of any sect?"... I almost don't speak any English yet and I try to explain everything in French mixed with Hungarian words. I have long dark hair, a moustache, and I also have a guitar. He probably thinks that I am a communist subversive disguised as gypsy musician, sent by the KGB to recruit members for a secret revolutionary organization.

And I have to admit that this is almost true, only communist should be changed to neoist?! and KGB to 14 Secret Masters of the World. My mission is to begin the Monty Cantsin? open-pop-star project, and finance the conspiracy by selling my blood.

MAY 2, 1980, Hotel Palace, Ukiah (Ca)

I'm performing *SHISMIC SUPPER*, with the collaboration of Kazu Yamogi, Pamela Rome, Abdada Le Clair and a nurse. Lazer couldn't make it. We left Montreal together on a Greyhound bus, six days ago. Lazer brought his urban psycho-punk drawings and razor blade images. I had a package of neoist propaganda, manifestos, pamphlets, a bunch of copies of the new issue of Neo. Our purpose has been to bus down to California, takeover Ukiah and turn inter-Dada '80 into a neoist riot. At the US Border inspection Station we got searched and questioned. "What is Neoism?!" Last night Lazer performed at No-Galero (my apt) which resulted in a long bloody scratch on his unshaved face. When the inspector told him that he had to return to Montreal I could see flames shooting from his big red eyes.

The hotel security detective follows my steps, a look of terror on his fat face. His arms are stiffly folded over his massive chest. Hotel Palace is the headquarters of Inter-dada '80. When I light a match to put fire on my miniature installation of plastic toy soldiers, prehistoric animals and other rubbish, the security man walks right up to me and announces: "You can't do that!" I throw away the matches, give a kick to the installation, throw myself to the floor and start to convulse in an over-theatrical epileptic seizure. Kazu lays on a long dinner table and Pamela beats his chest and face with her long black hair. I sit down and begin to recite in Hungarian. Abdada simultaneously reads *Seismic Manifesto* in English. "I AM MONTY CANTSIN EXTRATERRESTRIAL SEER, SPY AND NEOIST, TEMPORARILY STAYING ON EARTH AND STUDYING *DECISIVE QUESTIONS*..."

The nurse sticks a needle into my vein to take blood from my arm.



The security man has momentarily gone (probably to call the police).

I remove my clothes. I wear nothing but a wrap of clear tape. My penis is taped back between my legs.

I can see the security detective now with two other guys on his side.

I squirt the blood into my mouth as fast as I can. When I lean over and spit the blood into Kazu's mouth and hear the detectives shout "THAT'S ENOUGH!".

They grab me and lead me out of the room. I make some efforts to resist but I'm really happy with this unexpected ending.

*Sept 8, 1982, Tribina Mladih, Novi Sad, Yugoslavia*

We are hanging the exhibition. It consists of photo documents, flyers, manifestos, pamphlets of the BLOOD CAMPAIGN, since 1979. The sound system has arrived but no luck to get the video equipment yet. It's early afternoon and the performance is scheduled for 7.30 pm. Two of the organizers, an Art lover and another friend, are helping me in the installation. This room is on the first floor of a Youth House, a community center for multiform cultural activities.

My exhibition/performance is part of BALKAN CAMPAIGN, a neoist?! conspiracy event across Yugoslavia. I am in Europe since early June proceeding from country to country, doing my neoist missionary job. The tour began with *THE NEOIST NETWORK'S FIRST EUROPEAN TRAINING CAMP*, in Wurzburg, W-Germany. We also visited Stiletto in Berlin, then moved to Baroni's Agenzia Neoista, Forte Dei Marmi, Italy via Switzerland and crossed the border from Austria to Hungary in July. Up until now we didn't have too much troubles with authorities, only the secret police in Wurzburg gave Peter Below an appointment because of our illegal street actions, graffiti and posters. But right now here are two strangers in the exhibition room and they are talking in Serbian to the Art Lover and the other friend. It is pretty obvious that they are plain-clothes policemen. I'm keeping myself busy with the sound system.

Then the Art Lover reports to me that they have to go *somewhere* with the secret agents. I'm allowed to stay.

While waiting for their return I get acquainted with Anita, a cultural assistant of the culture house.

Anita is very eager to know everything about Neoism?!, Monty Cantain?, Blood Campaign, conspiracy,... Our meeting very fast develops into a sexual exchange in a dressing room.

Hours later the Art Lover comes back alone to tell that after an intensive interrogation they were warned not to carry on with the show.

Anita gives me a good bye kiss. She is very slender, has medium long dark hair, big open eyes, deep melodic voice, long red fingernails and probably a mini taperecorder in her cigarette lighter.

*Sept 21, 1983, Baltimore City Prison, MD*

"They will kill us," Eric yells me from his cell. "We are laboratory animals, we are white rats." I wrap myself up with toilet paper and try to sleep on the metal bench.

We came down from Montreal for the 7th International Neoist Apartment Festival. Last evening the police arrested us (Pamela Purdy, Eric Zip and me) for posting flyers. Handcuffs, patrol-van, questioning at the Central Headquarters. "I am a singer and Eric plays guitar. Neoism?! is our music," I explained. We got transferred to the City Prison. A few days earlier TeNTATIVELY spent a night here for his illegal train tunnel ritual, dedicated to the ongoing convention of the Church of the SubGenius. Eric hasn't been very lucky with Neoism?! A few months ago his collaboration ended in a hospital. It was our Noah's Ark action in Sherbrooke, Quebec. We put an old wreck on fire, danced around it holding flaming steam irons, splashed some blood on it, etc. Some of us got arrested. Later the whole country has been informed by the media that "neoists burned rats in a car in the name of art." They also claimed that we received \$14,000 for this event. The reality is that before putting the car on fire we removed the rats and for the performance we received only \$360 *honorarium* (and spent \$445). The next day a group of plain-clothes policemen raided the premises of The Neoist Embassy in Montreal. Going from room to room they were repeating the immortal question — "What is Neoism?!". They found the white rats in good health in their embassy cage. They wanted to know more about "a guy in military uniform who fired a gun" (a starter pistol), and about someone who was taken to the hospital. I can't sleep. "They will kill us," continues Eric. "I tell you Monty, we are the white rats, they can do anything to us, we'll die in these fucking cages, we are only laboratory animals..."

*March 6, 1985, Musee d'art contemporain, Montreal*

I'm standing in front of my very fresh blood painting. I finished it a few seconds ago and I'm waiting for something to happen. I did it very fast and the sleepy security guards didn't see anything.

Finally I have to yell to one of them, "Monsieur, look what I just did!" He approaches and stops at me. "What's your problem?"

"Look, I splashed my blood on the wall." Suddenly his mind becomes awake. "Who gave you permission to do this?" "Nobody," I say, "this is a gift for the Museum, a surprise." Meanwhile another guard gets there too. I tell them that I want to talk to the director of the Museum.

A few minutes later one of them comes back with the director of security. I tell him too that I want to talk to the director of the Museum. He wants to take me to an office but I resist and stay in front of the bloody wall.

After another few minutes of waiting the security director comes back with another man. He is the director of the Museum. He is very polite and talks very smoothly. I give him my letter of donation and tell him that I want to donate my blood painting, entitled *CADEAU* (Gift), to the collection of the Museum, in connection to the Museum's 20th anniversary. "You could call and arrange an official performance," he points it out.

Besides him and the security director 4–5 security guards are surrounding us and other museum officials are watching from a comfortable distance. Boris, Anne-Marie and Jack 5 are also here, representing the greater neoist network and taking pictures with a hidden camera and recording the sound. "I think this is official enough," I say. Meanwhile the blood has dried on the wall and became darker. "Eventually it will turn into gold," I warn the director. "Just leave it there and watch it." But I doubt that he will.

*July 22, 1987, Frankfurt Airport, Germany*

We are total tired. We had to leave Munchen at 4 in the morning and drive to Frankfurt. We haven't slept much in the past days. Neam looks balder than he is. I'm hallucinating. Last night I met Candy at Bizarr Hq and she moved into my mind.

I'm carrying two blood paintings. They are wrapped in paper.

As they go through security check the machine shows their pictures on the screen. Alert. In front of everybody they take off the wrapping. The detectives as well the long line of travellers are horrified.

There are syringes attached to the bloody canvases.

We are under arrest.

They search us, they go through everything. They open a bottle of Unicum and smell a small container of rubber cement. They look at Candy's vampire photo and try to read my notes.

"I am Monty Cantsin?, and these paintings were made with my own blood," I repeat.

We are surrounded by at least ten armed soldiers.

One of them is holding my blood paintings. People can read the titles, they are written with big gold letters: "All or Nothing" and "Fuck Neoism Now!"

*June 7, 1989, French/Swiss border, on the way to Geneve*

Krista and me are sitting in a black Fiat Panda. The Swiss inspector tells me to pull it over and open the trunk.

We also have to go into their building and empty our pockets.

I'm wearing a black suit jacket, the same one I was wearing the day of my performance in Paris, just a couple of days ago.

As I put my hand in the jacket's pocket to empty it I can feel a hypodermic needle. It's not the kind of object you really want to show to the border inspectors. But I have no choice. I put it on the silver bright metal table together with many other little things, stickers, badges, cough tablets, notes, keys, change, nuts, markers, postcards, stamps, pens, sunglass, tickets, glue stick, knife, pocket dirt, etc.

He picks up thing after thing and puts them on the other side of the table. The needle is the last one.

"What is this?" he asks.

"It's a needle," I say.

"Why do you carry it with you?" How could I explain everything about the Blood Campaign in a few words? Should I try it? He is 100% sure that he just caught a heroin user/dealer and he wants to find the evidence. I try the impossible. "I make blood paintings with my own blood and this is a needle for blood taking."

He doesn't say anything. Krista is taken to another room. I have to follow the inspector to another small building across the road.

"Take off your clothes."

I am naked.

"Bend down."

I do and he is looking into my asshole.

He breaks the silence a minute later.

"You can go now. But I don't believe in your blood painting story."

*Feb. 14, 1990, USA/Canada border, on the way  
from NYC to Montreal*

This is a special surprise inspection. An American border police patrol

car stops us before reaching Canada, an officer gets on the bus and tells the driver to follow the flashing patrol car.

Instead of going to the Canadian side we are turning back to the US Border Inspection Station, in Champlain. I have been here so many times. We have to get off the Greyhound bus and present ourselves to the inspectors.

After a few general questions, as usually happens to me, I have to empty my pockets and take off my coat and jacket.

The search begins.

The first thing they find in my wallet is a dollar bill with a few added marks on it: an arrow going through the bleeding head of Washington, a miniature portrait of a bearded man signed MRG, 1989 and a written statement "QUESTION AUTHORITY".

"Did you do this?"

I used to do 'money graffiti' and for example stamped a few dollar bills with the Neosism rubber stamp, but this one is not my work. "There are millions of artists in the United States." I wonder if he takes this as a threat.

"So you think this is art?!" He holds up the bill with two fingers. The other inspectors gather around us.

I have to bring in all my bags and put everything on the counter.

One month of mail from my NYC Po Box, Neoist?! propaganda, Art Strike pamphlets. Everything is addressed to Monty Cantsin/Neoist Headquarters.

I also have films, video tapes, lots of audio cassettes, folders of writings and printed documents in my bags. They have a look at my old, giant ghetto blaster.

I try to stay cool and diplomatic. I can feel hot waves moving up to my brain. What about if once I lose control? Will I become a volcano?

The shower of questions will never end.

"Who is Monty Cantsin?", "What is Neoist Headquarters?", "What is Art Strike?", "What is on these films?"

And, of course, the MOMA action.

Yesterday the Criminal Court of New York City found me guilty on both charges of Criminal Mischief and Reckless Endangerment of Property and they sentenced me to pay \$1000 fine (or 60 days).

I have no idea how much the inspectors know about Neoism?! Blood Campaign and the rest, but a short fat guy is running from

computer to computer and collects pages of data. He looks pretty excited. He shows the long unfolding pages to other officers. I would also love to have a copy.

## **MONTY CANTSIN SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY**

- Neoist Songs* — 12" EP YUL Records (Montreal) 1982
- Mass Media* — 12" EP YUL Records 1984
- Born Again In Flames* — 12" MINI LP MALDOROR Records  
(New York–Montreal) 1987
- Ahora Neoismus* — LP MALDOROR Records 1988
- Monty Cantsin* — Cassette anthology '79–'89  
Old Europa Cafe (Italy) 1990

## **COMPILATIONS**

- Glamour Girl 1941* — LP LAFMS Records (USA) 1979
- Anthems* — LP TRUX (Italy) 1983
- Panic Panic* — LP Planetarium Records (Montreal) 1985
- Inter K-7* — Cassette INTER Records (Quebec) 1987

# The Space Of The Other Bisexuality

## With Reference To

### Hélène Cixous' *Angst*

### Adèle Olivia Gladwell

#### THE OTHER BISEXUALITY

This must firstly be viewed as the amalgamation of myriad aspects (emotional, linguistic, psychological and physiological) presenting the subject as “consisting as it does of the non-exclusion either of the difference or of one sex” (*Cixous*). In other words we must view the “other bisexual” person as containing both sexes plus all the differences between those sexes in one body. Then we must ascertain the differences and their effects, to and by the subject; and also their interaction within one physiologically determined gender.

In other words, on a biologicistic level, we allow for the difference between male and female, and then also consider the inclusion of opposite sex genes. This simple concept (among others) applies to all aspects of the human — emotional, psychological etc. It is one train of belief that cannot fail to open up a spectrum of multi-context (and some contradictions and paradoxes).

So, we can easily take into account the physical opposition of male to female, signified by lack of penis or vagina etc. This directs our perceptions of elimination, hence naming and acknowledgement. The containment of opposite sex genes again will sometimes reverse the pretext of deduction (maybe negation). The female body that houses testosterone (signifying maleness); inside of a form that we have already deduced is female, not male. Vice versa. Now we go beyond this binary opposition. We consider the female mind (female because of physical gender definition) and the multiplicity of thought and consciousness (some pre-determined as feminine, some as masculine) to seek out what we truly mean by gender-influenced adjectives and nouns.

The problems for me always arise when we use the terms masculine and feminine. They seem to be the basis for much misinter-

pretation, misplacement and fore-reading. What do we really mean when we use these words? Context is (as I hope to illustrate in this essay) of paramount importance. A woman can be "feminine" and also de-contextualized, mis-contextualized so often. Yes, as I hope to show here, there can be a "feminine" way of thinking (as many French theorists expound), but it is not of the same derogatory context that gave us "passive", "inactive" etc., as many would have us believe. And these words too have suffered at the hands of mis-contextualization. Passive, illogical, emotional etc., do not have to be weak and inferior signifiers. We must go beyond base binary oppositions. This is what the "Other Bisexuality" in language does!

Hélène Cixous' theory that the Realm of the Proper and conversely the Gift signify masculine libidinal economy and feminine libidinal economy, was accused of being a regressive return to binary opposition. But when we consider fully her Other Bisexuality, maybe this can enlighten us to the fact that when referring to this theory Cixous was executing an initial description (a foothold or stepping stone).

Cixous recognised that the masculine libidinal economy was prone to self-identity, self-aggrandisement, arrogant dominance and the need to appropriate, classify and categorise. And that furthermore it could be linked with the fear of the loss of the attribute, i.e. castration.

Threateningly, the Realm of the Gift illustrates no fear of "giving away or giving over" something; a concept subversive to ideas of proper/property. While this may seem to advocate heterogenous differences — it has to be illuminated in order for us then to comprehend the extent of the Other Bisexuality. Cixous' definitions of Gift and Proper are, for me, seminal additions in literary theory and feminism (although binary, necessary in order for us to move beyond them and then encompass in one being *both*, with all the dilemmas inherent).

I could interject at this point certain concepts as maintained in Valerie Solanas' *Scum Manifesto*. This piece of semi-analytical prose starts off with an unprecedented attack on the male Y-chromosome, and its dysfunctions and inadequacies. This point has been rarely discussed recently, having as its basis a biologicistic arena and also much propaganda. It's debatable if I can take it any further in this mini-thesis (although some of the attributes of the Realm of the Proper may correlate with those of the mainly Y-chromosomed body). However, whilst I personally find the *Scum Manifesto* interesting, highly enjoyable and entertaining, I do not feel it suitable material to include



within this analysis, which will take as its body of argument structure of meaning and not inadequacies of gender.

Cixous' theory (that the Realm of the Proper correlates more often than not with the masculine libidinal economy and likewise the Gift with the feminine libidinal economy) leads onto post-feminism in the most seminal fashion because it seems to me that women are more likely to house both Realms than men. Yes, many women do appropriate, lineate and logocentricize. For what reasons, or from what impetus, I won't go into. Less men however possess the ability (or inclination) ever to stray wholeheartedly from the Realm of the Proper, at least overtly and comfortably. And this is of course because of society (not because of men as individual people), although it could be argued that many men seem to have woven their own Realm and libidinal trap (by their making and upholding of patriarchal society).

The reasons most men function within the Realm of the Proper could possibly be a direct bearing on the Y-chromosome but I would prefer not to get into that way of thinking, considering it just as much a case of nurturance as nature. Many men subvert and ridicule the Realms of the Proper and they are just as much "real men" if not more!

So, I do believe the perpetration of the Realm of the Proper is for the most part a socially conditioned realm. By this I mean it is upheld (despite valid criticism) as the only worthy realm, because it is the realm more fitting (in fact giving birth to) our economical/political/social order. Whilst existentialism is as metaphysical as anything else outside the structure (and, I personally feel, cannot exist wholly) the concept of freedom and autonomy in a subject will always be an untruth so long as the Realm of the Proper and the order of our patriarchal society seem to be one and the same thing. So, for me, it is necessary to look further. But at the same time we have to ask ourselves would the Realm of the Proper be so prevalent if existentialism were a more cynically examined or familiarly embraced area? The subject always has the abjection of social conscious restraints bearing down on him/her. In the same way one always has the abject aspiration of complete freedom or transcendence. And if human nature is inherent and eternal and a predestined continuum of instincts, would the Realm of the Proper still be existent? Or is a bad habit? Where does this leave existential theory concerning this?

So, to consider both genders and their binary oppositions and more importantly their differences (by this I mean signifying differences of varying degree) is a task almost as impossible as inconceivable. But

then surely all subjects who realise their potential and subjectivity/objectivity dilemmas can validate this difficulty. And as Cixous so cleverly demonstrated within the pages of her novel *Angst* — there are splits between the patriarchal order (with all its logocentric sciences), her Nirvana and/or her mythological Utopia (which most would decline to absorb on more than a few levels, much less embrace). The world of “real” sign, symbol, seminal metaphor, dream, illusion and personal fantasy is bizarre, confusing and frightening.

I wish to argue that, contrary to some critics’ opinion, Cixous was speaking of a reality (hers) within *Angst* and that it does have a valid foothold in our cosmos. Maybe, for some readers, stronger than the symbolism of our secular world, maybe for others not. The fact that *Angst* is not apparently political does in no way render it overtly or covertly non-social. Nor does it exclude feminine or masculine libidinal economies, action Realms, the collective unconscious, the true self, the hidden self or the body of the subject.

The dreams of the woman are as seminal as the patriarchal order’s naming of object for subject’s use. And within *Angst* this very kind of debate concerning fragmentation (as a constant agitation of the psyche and body) is revealed. Here I wish to stress that the Other Bisexuality always includes the physical nature/body as affecting (and being affected by) the psyche.

That which we outwardly perceive as X because it is by definition of W, Y, Z etc., signifying what is or is not, is only one system, really no more tangible than what the subject in *Angst* names as X, Y, —, A, B etc. Except that her system is incoherent (hence no system) to use, in its alien marginality. Maybe what we have here is the hierarchy of sense and/or perception. Sight over sound over touch over smell over illusion over fleeting feeling over dream over delusion over hallucination. It’s worth pointing out here Derrida’s theory of signification, as being produced precisely through the open-ended play between the presence or absence of other signifiers (i.e. deferral). We know that a chair is a chair because it is not a table or lamp or window or ...etc. But our system misses out so many sensual or metaphysical phenomena.

It has been assessed (probably never proven) that the male is likely to be more dominated by sight. The ‘foremost’ sense, paradoxically no more trustworthy than other senses and certainly not as encompassing. There are many many things which we cannot see. So often we see only what we want to see. We know these nouns for objects but often do not perceive degrees of observation the same. Neither is

objectivity the same between two people. And, when concerning the self/subject, sight is almost defunct; simply because it is prithy to so many degrees of perception, acknowledgement, recognition and so forth.

*The Other Bisexuality:* Firstly I wish to illustrate the inclusion of myriad areas withheld in Cixous' phrase. Then to show how it can/could work using the spatial narrative and so-called imaginery Utopia as used by Cixous, partially revealed in *Angst*.

Cixous has accused feminists producing theory and researching humanities of turning away from the present towards the past, and rejects their efforts as pure "thematics". According to Cixous, these critics "inevitably find themselves caught up in the oppressive network of hierarchal binary oppositions propagated by patriarchal idealology..."

(*'Sexual/Textual Politics'* — chapter on Cixous — *Toril Moi*)

Binary opposition is always, after all, a battle-ground, where one word and/or its meaning conquers the other. The word with 'female' connotations is always destroyed, acted against, by the 'active' 'male' word. For example: night/day, nature/culture, emotion/head, etc. Feminine is associated with passivity and death. But, Cixous denounces the equation of feminine and death as leaving no positive space (isn't death the most powerful space of all?) — implying that either woman is passive or she doesn't exist (as woman in our system of meaning). The point to remember is that language itself is not sexist — only the context; sadly (as demonstrated in the above word-pairings) the context *is* often sexist.

But, there can be then, hopefully, a new post-feminist language in which one ceaselessly subverts the patriarchal binary schemes wherein logocentrism colludes with phallocentrism to silence women.

Derrida's theory of replacing binary opposites with degrees of deferral, to bring about a greater "shades of grey" space (i.e. more, less, lesser, least, etc.) is a practical linguistic step which can affect our whole system of communication and hence our whole society.

The Great Suffering. The Terrible Pain.

The battle with mythological beasts. The jump from body, to word (noun), to dream, to body, to the bed and back again. Now; she is jumping so fast, so illogically, so fuelled by a need or wish to fill all the gulfs — to form her own reality. This does not occur at the expense of the symbolic order or social world — it exists *because* of this arena, wherein the woman first encountered her unease and need to examine this context. This context which was/is setting itself up as the only

reality. Because in this realm the sciences rule. They will tell us what is real and really not. They will line up and order all phenomena. So we can learn, lineate, contextualize, understand better, the world and ourselves. Cixous has never denounced this arena, seminal and mighty as it is. But so very fallible as it is. And also very ignorant. Take for example, the current debates concerning the Big Bang theory, quantum physics and chaos theory. Certain phenomena that science cannot understand in its linear structure.

But, Cixous has taken into account the biologicistic differences between gender, their contradictions and allegiances with the Realms of Proper and Gift and found that where one can call 'masculine/feminine' biologicistic nouns, one cannot always do the same for the libidinal economies (although it does often correlate). And more than that there is an area of emotional experience and expression, variant psychological inclusivity and states of human conditions that cannot rely upon, and suffers from, those terms 'masculine/feminine' as we know them in surface terms. That the frequent recurrence of female and the Other Bisexuality may be quantitatively greater than male and the Other Bisexuality is probable but not consistent. The common factor and consensus here is one of multi-context. Multi-context that gives birth to fragmentation, subversion and the social outcast or pariah. 'Masculine/feminine', as words, are so contradictory and inadequate as descriptions that there has to be a wider alternative (one which embraces the paradoxes of context and meaning).

Cixous claims the irrelevance of gender in her Other Bisexuality theory, and of the writing of the feminine (*écriture féminine*) says — "a decipherable libidinal economy (that is) read in the writing of male and female".

We should not confuse gender of writer with the 'sex' of the writing. Cixous also goes beyond the concept of the total being where man can fantasise away signs of sexual difference and no longer be fearful of his other (woman) — to a point where the subject is multiple, variant, often contradictory and ever-changing. Importantly we can reach a point where the differences can be stirred up and even increased. A wonderful and exciting concept in my mind, as long as the differences are, as Cixous believes, never stagnant or of stationary polemicism.

But, as before, the theories of libidinal economy and Gift and Proper are almost a return to essentialism. Cixous has returned to the two basic libidinal economies and I am in agreement, despite all we can conceive of the Other Bisexuality, that there is an inherent element

active, and an excitement (if not one fuelled by sexual battles). There can be a positivism derived from this kind of abjection. Sexes, libidos and action realms battling and co-existing in the same being.

So many women subvert the realm of the Proper/property: the realm of appropriation, self-signal, self-identity, self-subject as being the one conscious context (one context as opposed to multi-context variations in more complex ambiguous subject/object relations). The Proper also deals with classification, systemisation and hierarchization. But men also subvert our linear society, in the same way women can be 'Proper' orientated.

And the Realm of the Gift can open up a terrible imbalance in its relations with the Proper. The act of giving can be a subtle means of aggression. Cixous gives her views on this idea by stating:

"... women give unconsciously ... with a libido cosmic ... an unconscious world-wide ..."

(from *Laugh of the Medusa*)

This libidinal concept is very similar, very related to textual theory. And, as many theorists expound, 'female' writing (texts of the Other Bisexuality) corresponds with qualities of the Realm of the Gift. Open to differences, spatial, multi-layered with multi-narrative and willing to be traversed by the other(s).

"The Realm of the Gift isn't a realm at all but a deconstructive space of pleasure and orgasmic interchange with the Other."

"If there is a 'propriety of woman', it is paradoxically her capacity to deappropriate unselfishly, body without end, without appendage, without principle 'parts' ... This doesn't mean that she's an undifferentiated magma, but that she doesn't lord it over her body or her desire ... Her libido is cosmic, just as her unconscious is worldwide. Her writing can only keep going, without ever inscribing or discerning contours, daring to make these vertiginous crossings of the other(s), ephemeral and passionate sojourns in him/her/them whom she inhabits long enough to look at from the point closest to their drives; and then further, impregnated through and through with these brief, identificatory embraces, she goes and passes into infinity. She alone dares and wishes to know from within, where she, the outcast, has never ceased to hear the resonance of fore-language. She lets the Other Language speak — the language of 1,000 tongues which know neither enclosure or death."

(from *Laugh of the Medusa*)

Cixous has been criticized for her theories on 'female' writing and feminism, seeming to present a metaphysical case. But, as she sees

it, and certainly as I and others feel it: women and their writing, the writing/expression and the voice are as one. The body and the work.

The woman is wholly present within her spatial language. The writing is an extension of the speech acts (rather than a grammatical exercise) as well as poetics, etc. I write of speech acts because in the same way a speech act can illustrate level or context, so the writing is of myriad acts. "I speak", "I beseech", "I inform", "I imagine", etc. The female voice is one from the layers of the psyche and is the primeval (primordial) voice/song echoed. In the same way one can support these concepts by seeing the logocentric languages as unreal — operating as they do on one or few levels. The female voice is a favose chamber echoing with the sounds of the others; their quarrels and soothings.

"... the first voice of love which all women preserve alive ... in each woman sings the first nameless love."

(from *La Jeune Née* — Cixous & Catherine Clement)

Cixous says this is the primordial voice of the Mother before the symbolic reappropriated language, pre-Oedipal. Most importantly it is the voice, The Split. The terrible fragmentation caused by law, society and its languages and symbols. Personally, I prefer the words "universal chaos" to Cixous' term "Mother". A term less likely to evoke contemporary ideas of a woman's role, placing or unnatural/natural leanings (!). In other words, whilst we can acknowledge that this is the mother from which we are born and return to, it hopefully will not activate Earth Mother early-feminist idylls prithy to debate and classification.

So; a voice pre-syntax. Pre-naming of subject/object, of tense, of ego/id and superego. An eternity where noun, verb, subject/object, linguistic rules do not cut up the continuum of eternity.

"There is almost nothing left of the sea but a word without water: for we have also translated the words, we have emptied them of their speech, dried, reduced and embalmed them, and they cannot any longer remind us of the way they used to rise up from things as the peal of their essential laughter ... But a clarice voice only has to say: the sea, the sea, for my keel to split open, the sea is calling me, sea! calling me, waters."

(from *L'approche*)

She often uses a 'feminine plural' from all possible subject positions. This is common and valuable; priceless to behold in 'female writing'. As a 'feminine plural' the writer partakes of divine eternity.

Cixous' work is mythological in many ways because, as in common shared myth and/or fairytale, this can make for a magically resolute world. But because it is a personal mythology and not such a shared theme it also illustrates the battle of language and translation.

In the above quote Cixous' use of pelagic imagery (a recurring theme for her) alludes to a sensation that is polymorphous, endless, perverse. An element *par excellence*.

In Cixous' utopian mythology nothing can truly harm. Because the subject becomes every subject — no subject is unknown. The mother and child, or host and offspring are one with no separation. But then cleverly (in *Angst*), Cixous will evoke the gulfs and display the fragmentation caused by society, whilst attempting all the while to fill them. She does not often succeed. Dare I say, she rarely (maybe never) succeeds. This is why I defend her 'Utopia', and validate its verity.

Cixous is painfully aware of the body as containing space, and as a site for disturbance, fragmentation and miscontextualisation — hence an overwhelming desire to write. To write "it". The "it" Cixous refers to in a French masculine noun form. I strongly identify with this attitude. For her, "il" is *soufflé*. She speaks of "it" in a "rape" fantasy style. But, it is a ravishment that enforces greater power and strength in her — its host. Hence, a guilt. A guilt over manipulating language. The language perpetrated by the patriarchal symbolic order.

But the multi-(con)text, by *taking in* many texts, also becomes, for Cixous, the Mother.

Text — rape. Text — Mother. Trying to define Mother (god); give back to Mother (god) — an impossible task.

Cixous says: "... when I talk of discourse, text, I do not do so as others (males) would. I disengage myself from the philosophical but I do not discard them."

The X between philosophy and poetics. The contradictions. Is Cixous playing her own cunning game? A good example of the sort of twist Cixous' critics have accused her of is "refusing to accept the Aristotelian logic that excludes A from also not being A."

In terms of context, if A is omitted from the context, when meaning is placed, it is not A. This is the poetic way Cixous has of undermining the patriarchal symbolic order and its semantics and languages.

## BETWEEN BARTHES AND CIXOUS

Is the reader of Barthes exposed to such a space as to fade to nothing as a subject? And is the reader of Cixous, so full of contradictions within the vatic plentiful space of the Imaginery, an improvement?

Can Utopias (even if not practical realist social solutions) be extremely valid for post-feminism and improving society? And hence justifiable?

The fact that *Angst's* 'Utopia' exists (consisting as it does of several poetic strands and narrative drifts) — is indicative of the flaws in the logocentric system it is out to subvert and upset.

How can the Utopia itself *not* be riddled with flaws and contradictions? We are, for the most part, consciously existing within that which it is attempting to expose as insufficient. We are at war with our own selves. We are playing lovers' games with our death instinct or instinct for transcendence.

The battle between one already flawed 'idealology' and one that does not 'exist', as such. And if all ills, ails, imbalances, bigotries, oppressions, foul-ups and flaws are addressed and partially ironed out in Utopia (or the imaginary), then how much greater the battle; and maybe the victory.

The Imaginary is not wholly existent within the imaginary. This is the great abject rub. Within the arts, films, books; within natural history; within nature, sexual relations, religious fervour and myriad personal obsessions, we glean an insight into its rewards. Heaven on earth — hence we can conceive of utopian existence in the first place.

Social injustice, oppressive attitudes; society's abusing of, its domineering bent, upon women, upon minority, upon all. Everything that makes us despair. It is possible for (a) clear voice(s) to illustrate within utopian expression what social beings in a social world suffer. That is predominantly why it speaks. The mythological, all-encompassing Other Bisexual, post-subject — is still the mortal woman. God-brain state may be aspired to in spatial writings (in the imaginary) but it is still the mortal who wields the pen.

Are these writers of female gender playing into male hands? Cixous never claimed to be a political figure or analyst, but a poet! I don't consider therefore, that her view of ideology to be at all limiting. If it is, it is because like all human beings, the brain can conceive of really very little — even in dream. However, Cixous never proclaimed to have *all* the answers, just an exposé of the questions and multiple choice. Yes, it is the flaws of ideology that allow us to perceive it. The



flaws demonstrated, so emphatically, by a woman about a woman's psyche and body, in *Angst*. The flaws that create fragmentation and lead a subject to dream of expressing his/her Utopia; knowing that she/he will firstly never truly exorcise it, nor mediate it, nor live it. Because it is what it is.

Utopia comes from the contemporary social structure and also from all our histories. A structure so regimented that it will not allow Utopia back inside (in any other box than one labelled Imaginary Madness). The First Dream fits nowhere fully but in the head. A space. It, of course, reflects little if any bearing on stratification within sociology or structure (except in degrees and styles of mediation/translation) and that is why the limitless Imaginary is the chaos 'outside'.

It may well be, as Cixous claims, The First Voice (plural or as one). Emphatically, it is one of Chaos and therefore, climactically, and lethally — it is the Last.

Cixous' *Angst* does not present a full Utopia, although it does present the widest of imaginary spaces. I do not feel any of her work simply perpetrates Utopia; certainly not her theory of the Other Bisexuality. It serves but to remind us that in our mortality and limited human psyche this is what the patriarchal symbolic order does to any illusion of Utopia (or Nirvana).

We cannot strive without the effect of the conscious social system and its affectations: culling, interfering with, supplying and misinterpreting our languages and meanings; and that is why, perhaps, we do.

At the end of all history, to me, Cixous is the prime post-feminist (although I would prefer not to label her at all). She is the most glorious exponent of the spatial Other Bisexuality; Lover of Chaos and the Imaginary. She doesn't own it, it is housed within her; but how she overflows. She will submerge into the vatic, multiple, variant waters of the spatial word, meaning and sexuality; taking in the terrible pains and the ecstatic joys. If this isn't a gift, I don't know what is!

"Those who know they are dying know that 'not wanting' contains a great deal of 'wanting': it's only a question of a door; a fear; a page; and perhaps it would only need a word, but a word that isn't misleading, that comes straight from your heart's desire and won't be twisted.

"What if you said the word? Every time I have wanted to tell the truth I have lied. It couldn't come out. I chose to use analogies which I vaguely felt would save the truth. It wouldn't be harmed by being

written down. What if you did manage it? I don't think I shall. What's the use of opening your eyes if the window is curtained? What's the good of tearing off your eyelids if the room is in darkness? As if the truth were anxious not to be told, by me. Out of respect. If I did succeed it would mean I had failed. I would have brought it down to my level. That is what you are afraid of wanting to do. We are bound together by a hatred beyond words.

"Do you want to shape the infinite? Drag down to earth what has never bowed down? Bury the eternal? Get god on paper? Send him off in an envelope? To whom? To the self that no longer exists."

(*Angst*)

## THE FEAST OF REASON AND THE FLOW OF THE SOUL. RE:SUBSTITUTION

"darling what is going on here why are you speaking to me with that emotion when you know i cannot answer within that speech act you have not allowed for me to speak out of linear structure everytime i go to drift you disallow me that right yet you entice we with emotion and no logic linear travel and you know i cannot climb into your eyeball when its very unfair of you speaking only to me of matters of the heart when you i cannot play i do not want to play the game back for i have such a vision wretched of nirvana well it does make me strong in their order when everytime i try to set you adrift in my mythology you suddenly cling to the rails of sobriety so don't you go saying darling to me like that don't pretend you have lost control and ego and are dying and then walk a straight line and don't stagger down the stairs of my nirvana and call me your darling when you know I cannot climb into your arsehole you will not let me do that so don't you be saying that now darling"

(from *Murder and Mythic Word* — A. Dine)

Now maybe at this point in thinking we *can* return to the language of binary oppositions. In order to inhabit a world of appropriated calm and structure — we can use the polarities of female/male; emotion/head; instinct/logic, etc, with a new found felicity and liberty. Not necessarily expecting society to eradicate its language, but to expand its semantic positionings and footholds. To allow the Chaos outside the structure to be as importantly acknowledged and respected as man's logocentric, neat little order.

An acceptance of Apocalypse Culture. Is chaos a deadly vision?

“ ... The majority of humans have an inborn death wish — they want to destroy themselves and everything beautiful. To finally realise we’re living in a world after the zenith of creativity, and we can see so clearly the mechanics of our own destruction, is a terrible realisation. Most people can’t face it. They’d rather retreat to the comfort of New Age mysticism. That’s all right. All we want, those of us who have the strength to realise what’s going on, is the freedom to create and entertain and share with others, to persevere and cherish what we can, while we can, and to build our own little citadels away from the insensitivity of the rest of the world ...”

(Anton LaVey, from his biography by Blanche Barton)

## EPILOGUE: TEXTUAL/CONTEXTUAL CHAOS

We can attempt this literary ‘state’ by extreme and multiple use of multi-(con)text. By trying to cover and expound every positioning, viewpoint, use of language, level of narrative and textual form. And to include that which is opposed to patriarchal structure. But how far do we (can we) take this? How far do we limit or liberate our syntax? To one phrase, one paragraph, one tome, a vast library? What does it take to articulate our attempts at textual “god”? Simplicity or complexity?

Writing that is of the Other Bisexuality (writing that is itself female) attempts, at least, to accommodate as much of the plurality of ‘god-state’ in man, in text, as is humanly possible.

“There can thus be no ‘transcendental signified’ where the process of deferral somehow would come to an end. Such a transcendental signified would have to be meaningful *in itself*, fully present to itself, requiring no origin and no end other than itself. An obvious example of such a transcendental signified would be the Christian concept of God as Alpha and Omega, the origin of meaning and the final end of the world. Similarly, the traditional view of the author as the source and meaning of his/her own text casts the author in the role of transcendental signified.”

(*Sexual/Textual Politics* — Toril Moi)

*Bridal Gown Shroud* by Adèle Olivia Gladwell is a collection of fiction and essays published by Creation Press.

**Alexandra The Great:  
France's Lady Lama  
Mme. Alexandra David-Néel  
Kenneth Rayner Johnson**

The Tibetans called her Khadoma, after one of their Dakinis, or female deities. It means Walker in the Sky, a sort of feminine genie with wondrous powers.

She was born plain Alexandra David, in Paris, in 1868, the only child of Louis Pierre David, by profession the editor of a radical, political magazine. Some seventeen years before the birth of his remarkable daughter, after the rightist coup of Louis Napoleon in 1851, M. David had fled the French capital with his close friend, Victor Hugo, to go into exile in Brussels.

Young Alexandra's penchant for independence and adventure began to proclaim itself early in her life. Out with her nursemaid in the Bois de Vincennes one morning, the five-year old Alexandra managed to slip away unnoticed to spend a whole day alone, exploring.

At the age of sixteen, she walked over the Alps into Italy, accompanied only by a volume of the Stoic philosophical writer, Epictetus. And in the 1880s, barely in her twenties, she cycled alone from Brussels to Spain.

When a friend asked: "What did your parents say?" she answered casually: "I didn't ask permission — I left, that's all."

There was little empathy between her visionary and somewhat romantically inclined father and her mother, a rather petty, trivial woman and Alexandra seems to have reacted to this constant atmosphere by burying herself in books and seeking spiritual, rather than materialistic compensations. In Paris, she began to haunt the Musée Guimet, with its impressive collection of Oriental antiquities — plus an extensive library of Eastern philosophy and mysticism.

"Vocations are born," she declared, retrospectively. "Mine was born there."

Before this life-long love affair with the Far East showed its embryonic awakenings, she had toyed with the idea of becoming a Carmelite nun, but she quickly decided that convents looked more like prisons than places of freedom of the spirit.

A modest inheritance which came to her in her early twenties enabled her to leave Paris in search of first-hand practical, rather than theoretical, acquaintance with the East which lured her so seductively. Alone, she travelled through Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and India, until her funds ran out.

To support herself on her return to Paris, she joined the Opéra Comique as a singer and, almost as if it were a prophetic indication, was soon sent back to Asia with a touring company during the mid-1890s. In Haiphong and Hanoi, she was billed as a 'premiere chanteuse.'

But her affinity with the East still burned strongly within and, after several quite successful years in the operatic field, she impatiently forsook the stage for journalism. Predictably enough, she produced magazine articles on the Orient and Buddhism. It was merely the beginning of a career of writing and travelling which spanned more than sixty-five years. In this time she produced more than twenty books and innumerable lectures and articles. At the age of one hundred, she shrewdly told her French publisher that she would decline any forthcoming royalties; instead she would be happy with an immediate advance payment.

When she was thirty-five, Alexandra made a decision which she immediately regretted — she married. Her husband was M. Philippe Néel, a successful engineer visiting his homeland, but who was normally stationed in North Africa. They were separated five days later, although remained on reasonably friendly terms for the remainder of his life.

A few months after her marriage, Alexandra's father died, plunging her into even deeper despair. She bemoaned what she called her "lapse of spirit... that only death, perhaps, will terminate." The kindly Philippe suggested that a trip abroad, at his own expense, might lift her depression.

Without hesitation, she selected India, but first decided to spend the ensuing six years studying Orientalia and learning the sacred language of Sanskrit. She studied at The Sorbonne under Professor Edouard Foucaux, a Sanskrit and Tibetan scholar. Soon, she was giving lectures on comparative religion to the Theosophical Society in London

and Paris and teaching at the Université Nouvelle in Brussels. But back of all her fervent study, remained an unquenchable urge for first-hand experience in the lands which lured her.

"I wish to live philosophy on the spot and undergo physical and spiritual training — not just read about them," she said determinedly.

When she had finished her studies, M. Néel once again affirmed his kind offer. Indeed, he provided money for her travels and continued to give her what other support he could until his death thirty-five years later. During this time, she never failed to write — around 3,000 typewritten letters of Mme. David-Néel are still extant, although she herself kept few of her husband's communications.

On their Seventh Wedding Anniversary, in August, 1911, she left for Asia, where she fully embraced orthodox Buddhism and became a celibate. She did not return for fourteen years.

After a sojourn in India — juxtaposing English garden parties in Calcutta with the meeting of holy men, Hindu and Buddhist philosophers and visiting ashrams and remote monasteries in Sikkim — she eventually arrived at the Tibetan border, riding on a mule.

Twenty years after her travels, there remained people who still remembered her vividly. In his book *Peaks and Lamas* (1939), Marco Pallis recounted: "The French lady is certainly remembered with affection. Everyone who had known her paid tribute to her charm, vivacity and cleverness."

While he was in exile in India in 1912, the 13th Dalai Lama granted her the first private interview he had ever given to a Western woman. Mme. David-Néel gave a brief account of it in her book, *With Mystics and Magicians in Tibet* (later reissued as *Magic and Mystery in Tibet*), first published in English in 1931. The parting words of the temporal head of the Tibetan people to her were: "Learn the Tibetan language."

Tibet was, at the time, absolutely forbidden territory to Westerners, but nonetheless, she took the Dalai Lama's advice, learning not only the language but its several dialects almost perfectly. In the process, her interest in the shaman-like rituals and psychic training of the mystics grew accordingly.

In August 1914, she was considering leaving Sikkim for China, but the onset of the First World War made a sea voyage, with its danger of U-Boat attacks an inadvisable proposition. Instead, Mme. David-Néel visited a *gomchen*, or religious hermit of Lachen and, after a week of persuasion, got him to take her on as a pupil. By this time, she had

also informally 'adopted' a fifteen-year old member of the Kagyudpa Sect — the 'Red hats' — of Tibetan Buddhism, the Lama Yongden. Special quarters both for Mme. David-Néel and her companion were provided at the hermitage. And so, during the winter of 1914-15, while her homeland was embroiled in war, Mme. David-Néel was some 13,000 feet above sea-level, learning all she could of Tibetan lore, ritual and customs, and meditating in her mountain retreat.

Shortly after leaving, she visited the monastery of Tashilhunpo, at Shigatze, where she met Tibet's other great leader, the Tashi Lama, spiritual head of those same people over whom the Dalai Lama wielded temporal authority.

In 1917 she journeyed to China and Peking and from there travelled 2,000 miles to the northwest frontier. Civil war was raging and the land was infested with brigands and murderers.

One day she stepped outside an inn where she had taken refuge to discover a cluster of human heads — those of executed robbers — hanging, still dripping blood, over the hostelry doorway.

On another occasion in Tungchow, she fled the besieged city under fire, riding in a cart, as attackers scaled the walls and defending inhabitants hurled down stones. She joined a caravan whose belligerent leader she later dissuaded from having an innkeeper shot, following a quarrel. She intervened in a fight over seats around a campfire between two knife-wielding men — laying into them with her riding whip. Again, aided by her whip, she beat off an attacking mule driver.

She was a mere five feet tall.

Eventually, she took refuge in the Tibetan monastery of Kum-Bum — the name means 'hundred thousand images' — in the Koko-Nor wilderness of central China. Despite the normal proscription of women, she remained there for three years, readily accepted by the officials and teachers. She would awake at five each morning to the booming of conch horns and spent most of her days reading and translating texts from the monastery's vast library.

In 1921 she traversed the edge of Lake Koko-Nor and then headed southwest for Tibet, travelling as a woman lama with several servants — and, of course, her adopted 'son', Yongden. Unfortunately she was prevented from achieving her burning ambition — of entering Tibet — by Chinese soldiers. It was a confrontation that made her even more fiercely resolved one day to attain her goal: Lhasa, the capital.

In October, 1923, she dyed her white hair black with Chinese ink, stained her skin with a mixture of oil, cocoa and powdered

charcoal, dressed in the rags of a Tibetan beggarwoman and, with the Sikkimese Lama Yongden, trekked for five months across deep mountain passes, forests and unbridged rivers to Tibet. They posed as a mendicant lama and his mother.

During their lengthy and incident-packed journey, ever closer to their goal, one encounter they had serves to demonstrate the fearlessness and resourcefulness of this diminutive woman traveller. She and Yongden were waylaid by seven brigands who took two rupees from the young lama. It was a mere trifle but, afraid that the bandits might go through their other effects and find their gold and other valuables, thus betraying their disguises, Mme. David-Néel fell back upon a combination of her theatrical talents — and her knowledge of local superstitions and beliefs:

Screaming at the top of my voice, howling in utter despair, with tears rolling down my cheeks, I lamented the loss of the two rupees; the only, only money we had got... revenge would come!

Here I ceased to weep and rose to imprecation. The task was not very difficult, well acquainted as I am with the various deities of the Tibetan pantheon.

There was Palden Dorje Lhamo, who rides a wild horse on a saddle made of bloody human skins; there were the Angry Ones, who devour the flesh of men and feast on the fresh brains served in their skulls; and giant Frightful Ones, companions of the King of Death, crowned with bones and dancing on corpses. I conjured them all and implored them to avenge us...

I am a tiny woman with nothing dramatic to my appearance; but at that moment I felt myself rising to the height of a powerful tragedienne.

The forest had become darker and a light breeze had arisen which caused a distant murmur to run under the foliage. Lugubrious and mysterious voices seemed to spring out of the unseen torrent below, climbing towards us



and filling the air with threatening words in an unknown language... I could not suppress a thrill born of the occult atmosphere I myself had created.

I was not alone in this. The seven robbers looked petrified — an awe-struck group which tempted my photographic inclinations. But the hour was not ripe for snap-shots.

One of the robbers cautiously moved towards me... 'Do not be angry, old mother. Here are your two rupees. Do not weep. Do not curse us anymore! We only want to go back peacefully to our village.'

So I allowed my anger and my despair to be cooled, and I took the two coins with the air of one who recovers a unique treasure.

Despite this apparent play-acting, Mme. David-Néel had more than an outsider's view of some of the supernatural beliefs that prevailed. "I did not altogether disbelieve in that mysterious world that is so near to those who have lived long in the wilds," she confessed.

On another occasion, when she and Yongden were forced to halt after a nineteen-hour slog through ice and snow, only to discover their flint was wet, she invoked a little-known technique to help them. While Yongden wandered off in search of assistance, she placed the flint under her robe and concentrated on the ritual of *thumo reskiang*, a technique for generating heat. Eventually, as all of her inner reserves were focused on the visualisation of fire, she struck the flint, created sparks and lit a fire. Almost certainly, it saved them both from freezing to death.

By Christmas Eve, 1923, she and Yongden were lost and without food in a high, snowbound mountain pass. The young lama had injured his ankle in a fall; Mme. David-Néel's shoe had split at the toe and was "feeding on snow" as she trudged along. After three days without food, they met another gang of sympathetic brigands who shared tea with them, then left, pursued by a posse from a nearby village. Soon, she and Yongden were in the village, being cared for.

It was February, 1924 before the pair finally reached the Tibetan border. While Yongden went into the border official's premises, Mme. David-Néel stayed outside, praying and chanting. Without a hitch, they were allowed to enter Tibet.

For two months they put up at a small inn, while the religious

festival of the Buddhist New Year — which begins in February — was in full swing. Colourfully dressed, masked monks paraded in the streets and dancers performed ritual mimes, evoking ancient gods and deities. In due course, having gained self-confidence, Mme. David-Néel began to wander further and further afield in the capital, even visiting the Potala, the lofty palace of the absent Dalai Lama.

Then, one day in the street she passed a man who appeared to recognise her. Afraid that she would be reported to the Chinese authorities, she decided it was time to depart discreetly.

Switching from her Tibetan disguise to that of a middle-class woman, she and Yongden left on horseback.

Her correspondence with her husband indicates that she planned to return to France where she would settle down to write books and publish articles about her experiences.

With the money earned in this way, she explained, she would pay back what she owed to him and perhaps they could spend their old age happily together. But M. David did not agree with the proposition. After fourteen years' absence, he doubted if such a relationship could be picked up again. Besides, he protested, he had no space for her collection of some 400 books — and he definitely had no desire to meet her adopted 'son', the Lama Yongden.

Undeterred by this mild rebuff, she arrived back in France in May, 1925 and, after some casting around, bought a house near Nice. She decked it out in Tibetan style, with low, reclining couches, images of the Buddha, an altar and a rosary of beads carved from human skull bone fragments. She called her new home Samten Dzong — 'Fortress of Meditation.'

Ever her faithful 'son' and companion, Lama Yongden lived there with her and, over the next few years built himself a reputation as a writer and lecturer. Mme. David-Néel, meanwhile, became a recognised Western authority on Lamaism, wrote prolifically and successfully, eventually being awarded the title of Premier Commandeur in the Légion d'Honneur.

Her estranged husband Philippe remained in North Africa but occasionally returned to France and visited her. Locals would see them walking together in her garden, apparently chatting amicably.

In 1936, Mme. David-Néel decided she needed to find an erudite scholar to help her translate the Tibetan classic the *Tsong Khapa*. And so, at the age of sixty-eight, she and Yongden closed up the house and returned to Asia. They went via Russia on the Trans-Siberia Railway,

down through Manchuria into Western China. She felt that a suitable collaborator might be found in Peking.

But her plans were interrupted by the Japanese invasion. She and Yongden were forced to trek through torrential rains and deep mud for ten days until they reached the small town of Kanting. They remained there for six years, during which time her husband Philippe died.

In this sojourn she produced a French-Tibetan dictionary, a Tibetan grammar and wrote two other books and numerous articles, the latter mostly devoted to the current war and Chinese politics.

By 1944, the threatening Japanese invasion forces obliged them to move on once more. She and Yongden, accompanied by around 1,000 lbs. of luggage packed on their mules, walked to the nearest French military mission, where she demanded air passage back to India.

At the end of the Second World War, she and Yongden returned to their home of Samten Dzong at Digne, near Nice, where she continued her writing.

Despite some of the almost unbelievable phenomena she described as a result of her travels — lamas who bounded along at amazing speeds, almost as if they flew; others who could sit naked in below-freezing temperatures and yet remain warm and unharmed — her general approach was very much down-to-earth.

In a 1965 Preface to her 1931 book, *Magic and Mystery in Tibet*, she wrote:

All these seekers after miracles would perhaps be most surprised to hear me say that the Tibetans do not believe in *miracles*, that is to say, in *supernatural* happenings... In all cases, as I have said, it is always a matter of natural energies whose action is either spontaneous or controlled by individuals who have the capacity to do so...

I did not go to Tibet with the idea of seeing miracles there. I was doing research on the forms which Buddhism assumed in becoming Lamaism...

Nor did she have any fanciful illusions about the intellectual abilities of *all* the Tibetan monks she encountered; she by no means harboured the notion that they had a monopoly on some forgotten wisdom:

I did not, however, find the monasteries quite

what I expected. The monks of Sikkim are for the past part illiterate and have no desire to be enlightened, even about the Buddhism which they profess. Nor, indeed, have they the necessary leisure. The *gompas* of Sikkim are poor, they have but a very small income and no rich benefactors. The *trapas* are compelled to work for their living.

It was the Prince of Sikkim who introduced Mme. David-Néel, at Kalimpong, to an interpreter, one Dawasandup. This same man later became the teacher of W. Y. Evans-Wentz who, with the master's help, produced an English translation of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

Perhaps one of her most remarkable claims to achievement in the realms of the occult was her creation of a *tulpa* — a living thought-form. In a technique she had learned from various of her teachers, Mme. David-Néel used a process of intense concentration to produce the apparition of a monk:

I chose for my experiment a most insignificant character: a monk, short and fat, of an innocent and jolly type.

I shut myself in *tsams* (i.e. in seclusion) and proceeded to perform the prescribed concentration and other rites. After a few months the phantom monk was formed. His form grew gradually *fixed* and life-like looking. He became a kind of guest, living in my apartment. I then broke my seclusion and started for a tour, with my servants and tents.

The monk included himself in the party. Though I lived in the open, riding on horseback for miles each day, the illusion persisted. I saw the fat *trapa*, now and then it was not necessary for me to think of him to make him appear. The phantom performed various actions of the kind that are natural to travellers. For instance, he walked, stopped, looked around him.

Mme. David-Néel said that the illusion was largely visual, although occasionally she thought she felt the monk's robe brush against her or the touch of his hand on her shoulder.

Eventually, however, the self-generated phantom became a nuisance. He grew more gaunt and took on a "sly, malignant look." She added: "In brief, he escaped my control."

One day a visiting herdsman actually saw the monk in her tent and assumed it to be a living lama. Ultimately, the *tulpa* began to get on her nerves: "it turned into a 'day-nightmare.'"

"So," she wrote, "I decided to dissolve the phantom. I succeeded, but only after six months of hard struggle. My mind-creature was tenacious of life."

So, it seems, was Mme. David-Néel herself — although not, it would seem, of her own choice. Yongden died in 1955. The lady-lama herself continued to write and lecture.

But as extreme old age crept upon her, she found herself utterly disdainful of the process.

"Ageing is so sad!" she wrote. "Happy are those who are senile, crazy; at least they don't see their fall."

Perhaps she had forgotten something she wrote earlier and was the secret, it would seem, of her prolonged activities, both physically and mentally: "Travel not only stirs the blood... It also gives strength to the spirit."

She died on September 8, 1969 in her Fortress of Meditation at Digne. It was a mere few weeks before her 101st birthday.

Almost as an epitaph, she wrote:

I should have died in the Chang Tang, the immense grassy solitudes near the Tibetan lakes. As a bed the earth, the grass, or the snow. As a cover for my bed the canvas of my tent and the vaulted sky. That would have been a beautiful death. That would have been grand. But the gods decided otherwise.

# **PART TWO**

## **In The Jungle of The Plague Yard**

### **Simon Dwyer**

Confused, confusing, drunk and disorientated, Simon Dwyer travels and rants through the home of the unholy trinity, the virtually real land of Art, Commerce, and Religion — the altered states of America. Not so much Apocalypse Now, as Apocalypse from now on...

## HOT WAX AND HOLY WOOD

### Dreams, Visions, and statements of the Obvious

"YOU ARE ABOUT TO HAVE ONE OF THE MOST THRILLING EXPERIENCES OF YOUR LIFE" says the sign in the cluttered foyer of the Hollywood Wax Museum. I repress a small shiver. Not another one. "I am about to have one of the most thrilling experiences of my life," I think. The Italian Doctor of Semiotics, Umberto Eco, had called this place one of America's many "Fortresses of Solitude", where the Superman (of D.C. rather than Nietzsche) retreated for meditation. At present, though, it's full of frightened children and Japanese tourists.

The tour of the building takes about twenty five minutes as the customer peers at celebrities and historical figures that are, in the main, recognisable only by their nameplate. Iron Mike Tyson, Crockett and Tubbs, the two English David's — Niven and Bowie — the four breasts, Marilyn Monroe and 'Vampira', Maila Nurmi.

The junkie Frankenstein Bela Lugosi, unaware that he featured in Bauhaus's only good song and posthumously in Edward D Wood's incredibly bad film, *Plan 9 from Outer Space*, is the only character who appears to have benefited from the wax treatment, looking more rosy cheeked here than he did in real life. But the dummies, right up to the nation's most revered VD ridden hypocrite, Abraham Lincoln, all share the same glass eyes, shadows, and shiny nylon hair. Suddenly, the museum seems quite empty.

Captain James T. Kirk stares across the gloom at the crew of the ill fated Challenger space shuttle. Faithful Trekkies flock here in droves to worship. The waxwork Leonard Nimoy sits impassively — his silky pyjama top, black ski pants and pointed ears (made of what?) showing him in his *Star Trek* persona. The fictional Mr Spock being a more famous character than Leonard Nimoy the TV actor, and a much more famous astronaut than the lifeless crew of Challenger — means he gets



a better set, one that lights up. Spock, here, is more real than them, there. Even if neither Spock nor the shuttle crew exist, except as tiny images on celluloid and in the still, 3-D form of wax bodies: They are real in the mind and memory of the viewer. More real than 'the real thing', because the real thing doesn't exist, and anyway, they are here. In the mind.

The dead Shuttle crew, now heroic American icons who "gave their life for the exploration of space", as though they died on purpose, are remembered briefly, sharing serious looking room with American Presidents. The Lost Boys. Tricky Dicky, the villain who lost his tapes, and J.F.K., the good guy who lost his head and created a 'loss of innocence' myth which America used to absolve all its previous sins (including Hiroshima). Images, symbols, memories, little triggers. The most thrilling experience of your life.

The overall feeling of this place is — in a word — creepy. It's not a new analogy to say that the odd wax models are like a surreal predated piece of Pop Art, but, unlike most such pieces, these figures produce a reaction, a recoil, that has not been deliberately provoked. The closest direct Art related experience to it is in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, where the stoned, drunken British tourist can stumble in and see a piece done — I think — by the L.A. sculptor Edward Kienholz. *The Beanery* depicts a life size saloon bar. Distorted music plays in the background as figures lean over the dim, yellow lit bar, motionlessly trying to sip their drinks — forever. Their faces are clocks, clocks which don't move. It's scary because you look at the figures and at the bar and you know that is where you'll end up when you die. (A Hell where time stands still and you cannot lift up your drink). The Hollywood Wax Museum is scary because these people are, or were, rich and famous, and this is where they have ended up. Even they cannot escape. All but one of them, anyway.

Jesus Christ needs no nameplate, no introduction. He has a beard, and, after all, none of the other exhibits in the building are nailed to a cross. But that comes later. First, there is The Last Supper. Timing here is of the essence, as at the point of Man's Salvation, bright lights and taped choirs envelope the crucifix, leaving the Last Supper in the dark. So if one enters God's Room when Jesus is being killed, you can miss the Last Supper entirely. So the chronology of history is rather dependant, as always, on the viewer.

Not surprisingly the Last Supper in question is an attempt at an exact three dimensional copy of that depicted in oils by Leonardo da

Vinci. The long dead Italian, an imaginative genius and no mean sculptor himself, could not have imagined anything like this. The painting is replicated everywhere. Sleeping throughout the culture and waking up and looking back at you at the oddest, most unexpected moments. You remember seeing it appear in the arranged actors of Steven Berkhoff's adaptation of Oscar Wilde's *Salome* — a clever theatrical hint at the beheading to come — and also, inexplicably, painted on a pinhead exhibited under a microscope in Mijas' 'Smallest Things' Museum, among the sunburn and San Miguel of Spain's Costa del Sol. God, like Leonardo, gets everywhere, and is available in all shapes and sizes, working in mysterious ways. Here in Hollywood, He is larger than life.

But one wonders — is this supposed to be a reproduction of Christ's last supper, or a replica of Leonardo's Last Supper? A reminder of an historical event, a mythical event, or a duplicated image. One wonders if any difference should be perceived here, in the mind of the viewer, between the Passion and what is now almost a photographically accurate picture from the shared unconscious of Italian Catholicism. Then a voice, as deep and reverential as something out of Cecil B De Mille's *Ten Commandments*, prompts the punter to observe the scene not in terms of a viewer looking at a cheap waxwork representation of a Renaissance painting, but almost as if you were a ghostly uninvited guest at dinner the night before Christ was executed.

You could almost point at Judas and reveal all to the disciples as they munch their way through the dusty wax bread and fruit, and save the life of the young Nazerene revolutionary. (Indeed, in Henry Lincoln's book, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, that Christ did survive his supposed execution is seriously, and quite convincingly postulated.) One wonders if, in some time slip as experienced by the likes of Mr Spock, a customer from the Wax Museum did just that and changed history. Or Henry Lincoln, perhaps. But no, Judas triumphs as a flash of lightning streaks across the blackened set, and Christ is, in a clever scene change, bumped-off. The faces on Berkhoff's actors, or Oscar Wilde's characters, or Leonardo's painting, all look in the same direction as they, the viewer, and the world, are plunged into darkness.

"But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came blood and water ... and the scripture sayeth 'They shall look on Him whom they have pierced.' "

St. John 19, 34 & 37

A Roman Soldier, Loginus, holds the weapon that will in future become the Spear of Destiny, an occult relic that in itself will inspire

still more madness and death and belief, passing from the hands of Loginus through to Charlemagne and, via a circuitous route, to Adolf Hitler. A weapon used to pierce the side of one Jew, used as a Lost Ark symbol with which to kill six million. The disembodied voice of the narrator doesn't mention it, or it's own legend, so for now, it's just a spear, and for now, the tape tells the customers, they are having one of the most thrilling experiences of their lives. Christ is born, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

In the book, *The Hidden Art*, there is some speculation as to the true significance of The Last Supper painting, and suggestions that the picture is, in fact, somewhat heretical. The problem seems to lie with the figure that sits second from the left. He looks like Christ's doppelganger, and there is speculation that the image may be significant — fuelling the rumours that survived through to the Renaissance and beyond that said that Christ had brothers and, later, a family of his own. *Hidden Art* author Gettings himself seems unaware of the 'Christ family' story, which makes it interesting for him to say that "... the source of the tradition in Renaissance thought is so far unknown." And, "Perhaps Leonardo da Vinci was himself an initiate, a secret adept..." Curious.

Thanks to documents since unearthed by numerous journalists in Paris' Bibliotheque Nationale, we now know that he probably was. Leonardo is listed as Grand Master of the Priory of Sion between 1510 and 1519. Also on the list are such notables as Nicolas Flamel, Boticelli, Robert Fludd, Isaac Newton, Victor Hugo and Jean Cocteau. The list ends with Cocteau, who is said to have taken over leadership of the secret society in 1918 from Claude Debussy. It is said that Cocteau handed over leadership in 1956 — four years before his death — to none other than Pope John XXIII.

Pope John was a Rosicrucian since his days as Papal Nuncio in Turkey in 1935, and many of his judgements as Pope lend some credence to the idea of him having some connections with the masonic stream, not least his strange letter to all Diocese in 1960, when he wrote of Christ's physical spilling of blood being important, and also ruled that Catholics could join the Freemasons. Given the recent revelations unearthed by investigators into the death of Roberto Calvi — found hanging beneath London's Blackfriars bridge — which found connections between the Vatican Bank, Chicago mobsters and the Mafia-like Italian masonic lodge P2, the theory of Pope John 23rd's masonic involvement does not seem as far-fetched as it may once have done.

As the brief, three minute God Slot section of the show finishes and the loop tapes roll for another instant repeat (Christ dies and resurrects a few dozen times a day here), I wonder what it is that is glinting on the wooden floor and on the table of the Last Supper set, and I see coins. Hundreds of dimes, pennies and quarters, all have been thrown by faithful previous visitors at the feet of Christ. As if this wax 'museum' were a real — that is, consecrated — shrine. To many of the tourists from the Mid West, and the Hispanic cities to the south, (the hidden people of 'real' America) it is. This is Hollywood, the mecca of visions and dreamers and myths. As they should say in the Pepsi ads, it's the Unreal Thing. So, Christ takes his rightful place alongside James T Kirk and Mr Spock. At once both real and imaginary, he has an even more impressive set, because, like the shuttle crew, he gave his life for someone, or something or other. And like Mr Spock, he can travel through space — and time — through art and imagination. And here He is, more real than the "real thing", because he exists there, in wax, and here, in the mind of the viewer. Belief constructs the virtual reality. More concrete than the myth, more tangible than the Word.

And he is just as one remembered. Just as hairy and white and hippyish and kind and sacrificial as had been taught at school. People come in here to worship not only filmstars, but God, no less. Worship God and give money to the Hollywood Wax Museum. Christ's story, one of the all-powerful magician prophet being misunderstood, persecuted, and allowing himself to be butchered by the oppressors of the Nazerene sect, is the most powerful magickal act in the history of the planet. From omnipotence to omnipresence in one day. From the hill of Calvary to the hills of Rome, Rio and, holy of holies, Hollywood. The show is on. One hadn't realised.

The usual reaction to such a thrilling experience is to seek out a few large, strong drinks, so I stumble into the white sunlight of Hollywood and proceed to get blisters and sunstroke in my search for a bar, the nearest of which seems some 30 miles away. (L.A. has never heard of tube trains and has precious few cabs). The first bar I go into is about the size of someone's front room and is as dark as pitch, lit only by a buzzing Budweiser advert and a portable TV. In the gloom I realise that there are only two other customers, both Hells Angels the size of Arnold Schwarzenegger who stare at me as I stumble blindly towards the bar and rapidly try to think of a drink that they definitely won't stock here. Sure enough, to my great disappointment, they're right out of Newcastle Brown, so I leave. Quickly.

When finally ensconced with a 'pint' of weak lager that is, as is the fashion here, smaller than a pint in Britain (16 fluid ounces instead of 20), fifty percent froth and far too cold to taste, I discover that the second bar I have chosen is gay. I realise this because the man sitting next to me, a slim Italian calling himself George, leans over and beckons me with a snaking index finger that dances uninvitingly on a hairy little fist. I move my head within hearing distance. George smiles, looks at me and says that I "must be European" because I'm so beautiful and...can he kiss me?

George won't leave me alone, and it is one of those humbling occasions when as a man, you realise just how awful it must be to be a woman in such situations.

Despite my protestations in my deepest, most macho voice, my ego rather enjoys having this person repeat "yuwere sooo bootifowl", but I extricate myself and sit nearer the women at the bar. Naturally, they are all so phenomenally good looking they cannot, in Hollywood, be the real thing. And indeed, their foot sizes prove that they're all TV's or TS's, with shoes the size of HMS Ark Royal. Watching them dance to Jim Morrison aptly singing L. A. Woman on the jukebox is like seeing the NATO Fleet manoeuvre. They're fun, and happy and relaxed, but the love that once dared not speak its name has long since been overcast by something that few would wish to speak of, and the shadows in this bar are getting longer, darker, crossing tables and laying-on peoples shoulders like hands.

"But my secret is hidden within me. No one shall discover my name! Oh no, I will reveal it only on your lips when the daylight shines forth and my lips shall break the silence."

"Nobody will discover his name...and we shall have to die. Alas. Die."

Puccini 'Turandot'

Secrets, secrets, never seen ... In the days when homosexuality was outlawed, homosexual men made the best spies — used to keeping secret lives. Their lives were so secret that even their spy masters were often unaware of their private sexuality. Ironically such sexual tastes were considered to be a weakness in a spy but were, in fact, his strength. A guarded sub text, perfect practice. In the days when occult practices and beliefs were genuinely that — secret — writers and painters made the best communicators of the hidden truths.

The secrets carried by 'Last Supper' painter Da Vinci were, perhaps, numerous. A giant scientist, artist and philosopher — it was not really until I happened to visit an exhibition of his drawings and reconstructed models at the Hayward Gallery in London that I realised quite how substantial this man's genius was. The first man to understand inertia, sound and light waves and, a hundred years before England's William Harvey, the circulation of the blood. He was also an astounding mathematician, engineer and architect, having worked as such for Ludovico Sforza — "the Moor" — and in Egypt. (Both the Moors and Egyptians were of course steeped in magical thought, and this influence may have been relevant to his later life). In 1506 he moved from Florence to Milan, which was at the time under the rule of France. Four years later, he became Grand Master of the Priore de Sion, and in 1517 moved to Amboise, between Tours and Orleans — an area steeped in the traditions of the Cathars.

### **Songs of Love and Death**

While rich Americans think of themselves as sophisticated, well brought up Europeans such as my gay Italian barfly George like to think of themselves as Cultured. At the Dorothy Chandler Opera House, a slick concrete mausoleum dotted with the proud civic fountains with which big cities like to festoon themselves, the cultures collide. Old Europe, predominantly white, meets the new Europe. On the streets of L.A., you can see one black or Hispanic face for every white one. In the air conditioned, perfumed palace of the Opera House, non-white faces are rare.

The place is studded with famous and soon to be famous nose-jobs, gleaming capped teeth, expensive wigs, clicking gucci heels and wrists dripping with gold; and that's just the men. The women, straight off a Lorimar set, have shoulders the width of a small Japanese car and the stretched, leathery brown skin from the twelve month summers of the wealthy. Having said that, although there is probably far more money on show here, there is less of the chinless snobbery of similar events in Little England. The last time I went to the Royal Opera House in London I felt almost physically ill. Media types and minor middle-aged celebrities are everywhere; Jeremy Isaacs, Whatsisname, the Editor of the *Observer*, That bloke, the famous actor, Ken Russell slouching around in one of those ill fitting tracksuits that pass for being 'eccentric' in such situations, and numerous fat ugly M.P.s and their fatter, uglier wives with their noses in the air. No wonder nobody goes there.

Here in L.A. I sit, trespassing on the first night of *Tosca*, like — as they would say in London — a snotty opera bore. The building epitomises the meaning of that old word, swanky. In direct confrontation with the words of Ruskin, that architecture should be designed forever, Marinetti and the Italian Futurists, with all their nonsensical pretension, said that as we needed a complete break with the past then all architecture should be temporary, and that each generation should destroy the buildings erected by the last. What a stupid fucking idea. If you look at La Scala in Milan, then at this place, you know they didn't really mean it. They were, after all, Artists.

The world famous head of Plácido Domingo peeks up from the orchestra pit where he is conducting. He looks like a nervous Pilsbury Dough Boy. At least here at the Opera they know something that the world of popular music does not admit. Namely, that watching musicians perform is as boring as watching paint dry. Here they use the Orchestra Pit for it's obvious purpose, as a place in which to drop musicians. The hidden orchestra tunes-up from the bowels of the theatre, angrily scratching catgut and making the sound of a thousand fingernails on glass. Then, all is silent.

Rome, June, 1800. In the church of Sant' Andrea, our hero Mario is putting the finishing touches to his canvas depicting Mary Magdalene. As the Sacristan moans about his profanity, the artist muses ('Recondita armonia') on the contrast between his subject and the woman he loves, the singer *Tosca*: one blonde, the other dark, both beautiful.

Although a little Nutrasweet, Puccini's music melts the most cynical of hearts. From a male perspective his heroine, the headstrong *Floria Tosca*, represents more about the feminine condition than any text from an Andrea Dworkin ever could, or would dare. Consumed and weakened by the worst and most common sin — jealousy — she is made vulnerable to the ruthlessness of a sex obsessed, conniving politico. Yet, forced by *Scarpia* into a trap, she proves herself strong enough to commit murder, yet still too trusting and innocent of men's cold blooded sense of duty to be able to save either herself or her lover.

The opera is set within a forest of symbols, in the darkest of Establishments. A church, a government office, and a prison. Places where love and whispered plots take place beneath the stony ornaments of power. In this set — crucifixes, coats of arms, and guns. Since Puccini composed the piece in the early part of the century, these symbols remain unchanged, immovable. Unmoving. Or, do they?

"Love and music, these I have lived for."

*"Nell' ora del dolore, perche, perche, Signor,  
perche me ne rimunerai cosi?"*

"I've laid flowers on the altar.

In this, my hour of sorrow

and bitter tribulation

oh! Heavenly Father

why have you forsaken me?"

You're reminded of the flowers in the dustbin. The threads and desperate, accusing questions showing up in the later, angry electric cultures of London and New York. Bustling cultural wind-tunnels of broken dreams. Towns of scattered flowers.

"Oh, Heavenly Father, I know I have sinned,  
but what she's done to me, is making me  
crazy."

Lou Reed

As Maria Ewing pauses for dramatic effect, I hold my breath. Not because of the tension, but because if I don't I will cough loudly, and probably spray Ms Ewing and the front three rows with luminescent globules of sputum. Eventually, Ewing starts once more to sing, allowing me to cough-up something that looks like it came out of John Hurt in *Alien*. Asthmatics have a bad time here, nitrogen oxides and hydrocarbons reacting in the sunlight to form photochemical smog. It's worse in L.A. not — as most locals think — because there is more traffic here than in other places, but because the ozone levels are higher in suburban areas that are distanced from really heavy traffic, and Los Angeles is one huge suburb set down in a still, breathless bowl. Like Milton Keynes with palm trees.

Back in London, Friends of the Earth are hanging up posters printed on blue litmus paper — memories of bunsen burners and controlled explosions — with the acid rain falling on England, the paper takes only a few minutes to turn red. Effects the commuters as they drive to work, one to a car.

Aq. Dist. Fol. Laur. Te Verid. Enough stuff here to chloroform you... bad cough. Clogs the pores or the phlegm. Poison the only cure...



And white wax also, he said. Brings out the darkness of her eyes. Flowers, incense, candles, innocence, melting...Sweet lemony wax.

In the more urban, grubby environment of Britain, where the word 'smog' was invented, the pollutants are altogether more homely. Sulphur dioxide from power stations; Particulates from diesel engines; Nitrogen dioxide from rush hour cars and heavy industry; and my favourite, Carbon monoxide which peaks INSIDE of cars during traffic jams. Whatever, I'm just not used to this kind of smog and my throat is itching like sandpaper. I need a cigarette.

Of course, had this been inside the 100 Club or Marquee or Music Machine back in '77 or '78, it would have been considered by some quite *de rigueur* if I had sprayed the stage with large quantities of dubious coloured solids from the aching walls of my lungs. Punk stars were often petulant moving targets who courted a youth culture that took them at spotty face value. I was one of the best gob-shots at my school, using a hand flick technique that could hit someone at twenty paces. When, as a star-struck 18 year old, I met Joe Strummer atop a Number Eleven bus to The Swan in 1978, he complained of getting illnesses due to the amount of spittle he had to swallow at each gig from people who tried too hard to be street credible. I liked Joe, I liked The Clash. But I had little sympathy then.

Here and now, 5,000 miles and an aeon away, I have no desire to disrupt proceedings with so much as a murmur into my man-sized Scotties. Even though I feel somewhat out of place. This feeling is my problem, as, like most people, I always feel somewhat out of place. That was why I loved the first Clash album, and hated all the rest. The limp, Americanised white trash of Bernie's boys. The stuff that was adored by people who found it easy, the people who just didn't understand. Then, it was considered cool not to cope. Now, in these suits and colognes and thirtynothing glasses, being able to cope, and get on, is what it's all about. Sit in silence in the secular world of "Culture". (Sit/stand/kneel, dressed in these clothes, listening to the language which nobody understands....)

From the flashbulbs and filmcrews outside it becomes clear that this evening is an Event, something to see and be seen at. Forget culture. People exchange Events with each other in theatrical whispers across the aisles, and one realises that to many people here, Puccini is to the Opera what Shakespeare is to the Theatre. Both are more popular and more misunderstood than even The Clash at their height.

Puccini is of course adored by opera bores the world over, just as Shakespeare is adored by supposedly literate theatre bores. Of course, if the rumours that Sylvester Stallone is due to play the part of Puccini in a forthcoming bio-pic are true, Puccini's popularity among the middle classes will take a huge nose-dive, as such hype will put the composer on a par with Batman and make him a part of popular culture. A sort of dead Andrew Lloyd Webber. (Since writing, we have of course witnessed Gascoigne's World Cup weeping and the popularisation of Puccini by the BBC, which has had the effect of making Puccini something of a no-no among the opera types who read *The Telegraph*. Puccini, now, is more *Daily Express* or *Mail*).

Like an 'appreciation of' musicians and composers, cultural Events are used as forms of recognition. Here in Los Angeles the art has been reduced to a simple name-drop. I start talking to a pillock at the foyer bar who reckons he's just produced Mel Gibson's new film, and mentions that he's having dealings with "Dustin". I respond by telling him I've recently seen Hoffman in Peter Hall's London production of *The Merchant of Venice*. "Wow!" shrieks the man, no doubt thinking that this is cultural stuff, but there's no money in it. "What was he like?" "A small man with a big nose." Haw haw haw.

I remember my school teacher telling me that the *Merchant of Venice* is a play about greedy Jews. But both works, the *Merchant of Venice* and *Tosca*, productions of which received rave reviews in London and L.A., are similar to Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, or the best editions of Gene Rodenberry's *Star Trek*, and have pointed undercurrents. Phallic shapes beneath the robes of the priests and rabbi's, the lawyers and lovers, the police and thieves.

All show how difficult — how impossible — it is for decent, thinking humans to be true to themselves and others, to their word and dogmatic beliefs. How does Captain Kirk maintain natural justice without breaking the Prime Directive? What should King Herod do when he rashly promises Salome anything she wishes, and she asks for the head of John the Baptist? And, buried in the subplot — how can Bassanio give Portia's ring to the lawyer who had saved his life, without breaking an oath before God made to friends, or an oath to a wife? How can Tosca save her lover and remain God's child, when prostitution and murder are her only choices? All face the morality — and mortality — that we are trained to leave unexamined and ignored.

Art is invested with life when it is a mirror in which the viewer can recognise himself, and particularly when it illustrates what happens

when that mirror cracks. Under the pressure of broken promises, lost beliefs, threats, and everyday life, dogmatism and rulebooks are shed and adaptable, anarchic humanity, friendship and love shine through the social clutter. And in all such battles, with all such choices, goodness is confused with evil (such as Tosca murdering Scarpia) and wrong-doing is condoned by the righteous (such as Herod beheading John to fulfil a promise, or Shylock being exiled). In the real, mirrored world, all morals turn a darker, more convenient shade of grey. And Humanity, like Art, is beyond such judgemental definitions. At it's best, Art can show you life as it really is. Like Shakespeare, Puccini could tell you a good story.

It is a shame that such glaringly obvious and simple, sometimes genuinely subversive messages are lost or buried by the academics, intellectuals and artful posers who have effectively destroyed the pleasures of the Theatre or Opera for what they condescendingly refer to as the 'masses' by being unable to see the wood for their own cerebral sawdust. Perhaps because all realistic solutions and interpretations of life, and all good art pieces, ARE on one level simple and in some sense subversive. In other words, evolutionary. It is a shame, too, that the knee jerk reaction to such formal 'Cultural' pursuits from the self appointed men'o'the people is one of genuinely bigoted, thoughtless derision, philistinism and inverted snobbery.

Though it is hardly surprising. Despite the incursions of clever opportunists like Malcom McLaren, the media have for the most part presented the Theatre and Opera only in discreet sanitised packages.

Even after Puccini's fall from upper middle-class grace, using operatic music to sell such commodities as airline tickets and cars infers that the air tickets are for those in the 'executive' club seats and that the cars are expensive and therefore exude 'class' — a horribly tatty British idea. Thus the opera is the domain of people who drive BMWs along Alpine country roads, call each other "Darling" and never spit. *Vorsprung durch technik*, as they say in Surrey.

Despite what the media and advertisers and academics have gone and done, Giacomo Puccini's humanist light rises above the cultural excrement. This man — an early popstar who tailored the length of his compositions to fit onto ten inch 78 r.p.m. records — obviously didn't write this music because he wanted to be thought of as a cultural emblem for later generations of people with padded shoulders and tuxedos, or as a topic for the boring conversations of intellectual dullards with PhDs. He wrote them because he was in love.

And in all such theatre, as in life, as in love, there are victims. Victims of the situations and choices and morals and social codes that everyday life comes up with.

Be it *Salome*'s author Oscar Wilde in prison, "Truth is rarely pure, and never simple." Or Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*: "The world is still deceived with ornament. In law, what plea so tainted and corrupt, but being seasoned with a gracious voice, obscures the show of evil?" Or, closer, the words of former Los Angeles resident, author of The Beach Boys' songs and architect of the Tate/Bianca murders, Charles Manson — "Can the world be as sad as it seems?" Where does all this leave Belief, or contemporary art, or America? As one listens to Maria Ewing's aria, or turns on the C.B.S. News, or looks into the empty eyes of the crack addicts on the smoggy streets of East L.A., there can be only one answer.

## I BLEW UP YOUR BODY

At the opera's interval, a large, wobbly cellulite backside is shoved in my face. I look, slightly annoyed, at the owner as he squeezes past to the toilet. Crumpled cream suit, dyed blond hair, round glasses. Some idiot trying to look like David Hockney, I think, before realising that the man is trying to look like David Hockney for a very good reason.

At the bar selling the feeble Californian Chardonay, Hockney fiddles with his hearing aide. This being Los Angeles Opera House, not Tesco's in Bradford, he is studiously ignored by people trying hard to show their complete disinterest in one of the world's most highly priced living painters, while all the time wishing that he would walk over to them and say hello. These are, after all, the people who made Hockney rich and famous, the people who swim in the pool he painted at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, shop in the chic, hip jewellery stores in the Melrose Avenue he helped make famous, live in the sandy Californian hills and valleys he immortalised on canvas. But David Hockney's L.A. is not theirs. Because Hockney, like most painters, lives in a world of his own invention.

It is strange, synchronistically, that Hockney is here, as it was Hockney who introduced me to the opera in the first place. Enthusing about his sets for the 1978 staging of *The Magic Flute* (without the usual Masonic symbolism) Hockney described the piece on television, and was enthralled. His child-like enthusiasm for opera was infectious. Derek Jarman once told me that he was a film maker because film was

a medium that “used it all up”. Painting, writing, designing, acting. Through Hockney I realised, Opera can be like that too. Only in the Opera, more people screw around and get killed.

.... Stop press. Cutting flickers on to the screen. *Daily Express*, 5th May 1961. Lord Birkett opens a students art show at the University of London. Two awards made. Professional Class (students making art their career) — First Prize of £25 to David Hockney (Royal College of Art). Amateur Class (students whose first subject is not art) — First Prize of £20 to Michael Derek Jarman (Kings College)....

Hockney's deceptive, simple paintings and photo montages are interesting because they invite the most obvious little shifts in visual perception. Before Hockney, many painters were just looking at the surface of the water, a flat two dimensional plane. But in his colourful paper pools, you can look into the water, through it, onto it, at it, or at what's going on beneath it.

Hockney and other painters throughout history have invented a way of looking that is better than the ‘real thing’. Just like Leonardo, or the artist who creates a beautiful altarpiece or flattering portrait. When you see one of Hockney's swimmers diving into one of his cool blue pools, that representation of what you see — a big splash, a body, waves — seems more realistic than when you see a photograph of the same event, in which you'd just see a frozen splash. A splash that is so still, it doesn't look like a splash at all. Time is freed to move by the painter. In still photographs, or waxwork dummies, time is caught. What is fluid is made solid = no reality. Of course, painters, and some believers have gone on to assume that this way of presenting and looking at the world is the correct one, the real one. It is not. When you look at someone dive into a pool, you don't see a David Hockney painting at all, and vice versa. Pseudo reality is not the same as physiological reality, and what we have been trained to recognise as being realistic, should not be confused with the real thing. To argue, as many painters including Hockney are fond of doing, that painting is any more valid or realistic than any other form of representational recording, is simply stupid. There is a confusion between art which is a contributing agent towards genuine perceptual changes and art as a mechanism for false consciousness that has been externally manufactured.

The Painter only presents the world in edited, highly stylised terms that are as unreliable as any other medium. Indeed, the reason why some painters are famous and other painters are not, is because of

the way in which their vision has been technically expressed and, above all, edited. If Leonardo had chosen to imagine Christ on the toilet, rather than at the Last Supper, it's probable that his painting would not have been reproduced in Hollywood at all. Leonardo had edited, highlighted and condensed his vision of an historical, or mythological event, to fit-in with the social expectations of his day. How real is that? But more of Christ, and more of toilets, later.

Alongside the equally famous Francis Bacon and Lucian Freud, Hockney is still one of my favourite rich, big, still-breathing British painters, not so much because of how he paints, but because of what he says. I liked the way he failed at Art College, and decided instead to draw his own Diploma and award it to himself, realising that there are few finite arguments, and that he could see things in a way that many of his tutors could not. And I like the way he became one of the first members of the Artist-as-Pop Star cult, as that's how accessible art should be. (Even if it has contributed to a situation in which artists aspire only towards pop stardom). And I like his enthusiasm and his ideas. He is after all responsible for possibly the most simple, perceptive and accurate quote to come from the mouth of any painter in the late 1980's. It went something like this.

**"THERE ARE FAR MORE INTERESTING THINGS  
HAPPENING NOW IN SCIENCE THAN THERE ARE IN ART."**

He is of course right. The work of Frijtof Capra, Niels Bohr, Alan Stockton, Carl Sagan, Fred Hoyle, Stephen Hawkins and many others over the last few decades has moved science closer to religion and art and away from Newtownian mechanics and Cartesian dualism. Few in the secular religion of the art world (except for Hockney and people like Tony Carter) appreciate it, but the theories and interpretations surrounding such things as Quantum Physics, Black Holes, Time, Chaos Theory and so on are more far reaching, relevant, creative and inspiring than anything that ever crossed the lips of a supposedly professionally 'creative' human being in the history of the planet. If only more artists, teachers, theologians and philosophers realised that fact and reported it as honestly as Mr Hockney, then the world would be a better place to live in.

Because the world would not be as sad and empty as it seems, as Truth would not remain in a permafrost, dictated by priests, politicians, artists or even scientists. In the subjectively perceived universe of constantly shifting truths that much current scientific thought sug-

gests, much more speculation, and many more dreams and versions of reality can be accommodated, and should be tolerated. Indeed, part of the social function of science it seems to me is to illustrate, in a demonstrable way, the idea that no theories are sacrosanct. As Spock may have sung on his Vulcan lyre, There's a space for us...

Driving away from the Opera House you see a flapping poster advertising a screening of the film version of Richard O'Brien's tacky glam musical *The Rocky Horror Show*, in which aliens land on Earth to invade it and, through the lure of physical pleasures and the corruption of their objective, Earth ends up invading them — leaving only the remaining humans to regret the passing of the liberalising trend of the aliens and humanity's own futility. We are left "crawling on the planet's face/some creatures, called the human race/ Lost in Time/ Lost in space...and meaning." The picture is one of a race of self obsessed, confusing, baffling animals scurrying around a pinprick planet, wasting time by taking themselves too seriously. Wasting sex and art and love and life. Although smalltown American Good has triumphed over some Alien Evil (after a fashion) even in such supposedly trifling entertainment as the Horror Show, men and women are shown to break their vows, act amorally, wrestle with guilt, be flexible, veer from the dogmatic beliefs of their kind, and CHANGE. The offer from Space rejected, the characters are left lonely, isolated, and without direction. Left to get married, have kids, and face life and death in real America.

"They slipped the bonds of Earth, to touch the face of God..."

Ronald Reagan's obituary to the Challenger Crew.

As in real life, Space, the final frontier, is seen as offering a new challenge. And real life in the narrow, workaday world, is seen as being shallow and unfulfilling. As with the best art, the challenge of space is one to the individual human's perception.

When, like Captain Kirk or Brad and Janet, you stop briefly to consider the cosmos, you challenge your perception. Your answer to this may be, for instance, that you realise that you are an integral part of some huge soft machine, or it may be that you are God, or the Son of Sam. Whatever, through realising — or inventing — your role, you change your perception. Art has encouraged you to do this, and in this respect, art can be beneficial, as only through evaluating your perception, and challenging yourself, can you save the world. Your world. Given his earlier quote, it is perhaps not surprising that Hockney has filled his art with obvious references to Space and Time, through

splashes in water. Floating, drifting, magnifying. Water. Only through challenging your perception can you save the world...

For all His waxworks and his quarters and dimes, Christianity as practised by established churches and worshipped in museums cannot any longer do this for you. Christianity as practised since St. Peter was never meant to do this for you. When people pray to the Christ who has forsaken them, or throw coins, or kiss feet, or wage holy war, surely they are — like the Shakespeare bores — being rather too complicated and literal. Christ's basic message, as a great magician, was one of tolerance. What this prophet asked for was not coinage or carnage, what he asked for was simply a change in one's perception. But what we get is not his question — his challenge — what we get is his image, his words, his cross, used as weapons against our asking of questions, against such a shift in perception. A totally perverted, unholy image that is used against knowledge, against change, against the evolution of the very life that Christians believe he had a hand in creating.

Some people believe that, as this is the case, one merely has to use that powerful image in order to alter people's perceptions. (Floating, drifting, sleeping — turning up throughout the culture, through Time, in time. He was up there in space, bleeping. He was out and bleeding, and the orchestra leader, who had, I saw, a Craven A between his lips, bent down to inspect the damage. He's floating in a most mysterious way, his wonders to perform. Laughter. Applause. Haw haw haw. Bloody big nose. Bloodied.) But, like much organised religion which has missed the point, much art — which could be used to challenge perception and perhaps inform evolution — has concentrated on the style and not the content.

## **PLENTY OF ROOM AT THE HOTEL**

Here in California we have fund raising supporters of the Jews and the Arabs. Supposed adherents of the Pope's words who give money to the IRA's romanticised 'struggle', and Pro-Lifers who push pregnant women down stairs to protest against abortion. We have neo Nazis and — even more unpopular here — Socialists too. Like the nitty gritty, sandy reality of California, the real world is a complex place and a cessation of conflict and violence, slavery and famine, is, in such a complex world, impossible. As everybody has a good reason for doing, and thinking, and believing what they do. Charles Manson had a good reason, Herod, Hitler, Napoleon, Tosca, Judas, the IRA, the Klingons.



There is no solution to the problems created by such believers to be found if one adheres to linear, dogmatic belief structures and modes of thinking. And sorry, but the chances are that Christ will not literally be born again and make the world one nation under a groove. The only solution is the most obvious, though difficult, perceptual one. This is why visual art, writing and music can be important. It's just unfortunate that so little contemporary visual or conceptual art has anything to offer in terms of informing a viewers perception, even though, through its lack of linear structure, it can be seen as having advantages over writing, its practitioners do not exhibit the ability writers have to communicate genuine thoughts and emotions.

## IN THE DAWNS EARLY LIGHT

I don't go to Disneyland, as Disneyland is hell on earth. I know. It's on TV as I wake, still jet-lagged, at six in the morning. I get a tub of frozen yogurt from the fridge that I've had to prop up against our door in lieu of a key. I stare, transfixed. Outside my window the sun is just starting to come up with the smog.

I love the morning. The Earth takes on the glow of a pregnant woman, bloated with Time and future possibilities. The cool, clear air, slowly, almost imperceptibly lightening, makes L.A. look like a beautiful deserted watercolour. Washed clean, holding all those dreams. Wakening, opening, expectant.

In the parking-lot below a man who has been sleeping in a skip is rising, stretching, then shitting. He takes a supermarket trolley and walks off into the morning sun. On the TV, people at Disney are sitting on an underground ride called 'It's a Small World', and I see that the Devil is in fact an American who'd like to teach the world to sing. The walls of this ride truly are worse than the characters one sees in a Hieronymus Bosch painting. They consist of disgusting children, all of whom should have been murdered at birth along with their filthy parents, dressed-up in national costumes which nobody ever wears. The foul creatures all sing and dance to a famous children's tune about 'togetherness' that is typical Disney. The world is a complex place, but in America, all problems can be reduced to plastic and wax, made simple, safe, lovable and, like Christ in the Wax Museum, strangely AMERICAN. A lonely place, where someone still believes. In something...

California is all skin, no core. Without the dirt and rain of London or New York, it's residents are living under a badly prescribed,

black sentence: to live a life of happiness in the sun. All the while, beneath their sandled feet, and at the back of their cranium, the San Andreas fault shifts and murmurs. Above, the glimmering metal snake refracts and blurs in the heat. Motionless.

Blisters. Aimlessness is thick in the air. Social insecurities break out like boils. California lacks social self justification, cultural history, and any sense of spiritual fulfilment. California just exists. And there is nothing to complain about when you have a palm tree growing in your back garden. In fact, the demeanour of Californians is created by the climate, in which it is more sensible to wear jeans, shorts, and T shirts to work and play. Clothes have an effect on behaviour. When one walks down a street in Bermuda shorts or lounges around in holey jeans it's hard to take yourself quite as seriously as you would in a grey flannel suit or dirty overalls, battling with the traffic and the rain. Hence, terrorists and priests are a European phenomenon, in California, you have cocaine, cults, and commercials. One can get into thisism, thatism and whatever bag one finds appealing in one's search for purpose. In California, almost anything goes. Oh yes.

The TV commercials here on the West Coast are terrible sub Victor Kavan/K-Tel/local fleapit cinema curry house 'round-the-corner affairs. Except for a very few ads. made for the giant companies like Coke, the art of TV advertising here is surprisingly primitive, and usually involves some obnoxious child or old man shouting about bran helping bowel movements, or a mother telling her teenage daughter that she has a feminine odour problem and should clean her vagina with some unfathomable product from Johnson and Johnson.

Of the big budget commercials here, as in Britain, the tendency is towards New Man smarm. These men are obviously what the Disney dancers grow into if not creatively culled. Adverts are full of buddy images of real hunky guys, glistening with sweat from the gym, smiling at each other, picking their horrible kids up from school in their ozone friendly cars, donning expensive dinner jackets and hugging their old Italian Dad. This, it seems, is "the best a man can get".

Since the late Sixties the media has been concerned primarily with women. This has created a generation of men who have identity problems. The Nineties will be a decade concerned almost totally with Men trying to create a new identity and social role. Big boys crying into their Aqua Libra, trying to come to terms with it all.

Sounds awful.

“Americans are funny people. First you shock them,  
then they put you in a museum.”

Jean Cocteau

Now, more of Christ, and the promised references to things that go on in a toilet. I open the papers here and see that another dead artist and another image of Christ is causing news. Robert Mapplethorpe, who finally succumbed to his illness in London, had a posthumous show, ‘The Perfect Moment’, cancelled by the Corcoran Gallery in Washington amid fears of official backlash and subsequent cuts in funding. Several New York artists decided to boycott future shows by the gallery, and the Corcoran’s Director resigned. The Mapplethorpe show was transferred to a smaller gallery at the Washington Project for the Arts and, as one might expect, the show attracted forty times as many people as any previous exhibition held at the venue.

Mapplethorpe’s contemporary Andres Serrano’s show went ahead, and featured the by now infamous *Piss Christ*, in which we find an image of our old friend again, this time floating in urine. In the type of country which has just discussed passing a law making it illegal to ‘desecrate’ the national flag (what would’ve become of Jasper Johns or Laurie Anderson?), the piece caused calculated rage.

Senator Jesse Helms — a man who conveniently photographs rather like a Nazi war criminal — rapidly introduced legislation which would ban federal funds from being used in any way to support exhibitions of “obscene and indecent art”. The National Endowment for the Arts were targeted for all the usual righteous indignation of the immoral minority on the All-American Right, who had seized the Perfect Moment to strike back at liberalism. The Far Right had been disappointed with President Bush for not acting to support America’s fight against all things alien and filthy. They were losing the unifying potency of the Cold War, which Gorbachev was dismantling, and needed to muster some righteous indignation against a target that Middle America would perceive as a threat. Mapplethorpe and Serrano were easy meat.

The National Endowment for the Arts listened apprehensively to Senator Helm’s protestations, and when President Bush said that he was “deeply offended by some of the filth that I see and to which federal money has gone”, the Chairman of the NEA promised that in future “obscenity will not be funded by taxpayers money”.

The supposedly liberal Arts Establishment countered — screaming about the First Amendment — and the hornets' nest, which should be stirred up by art every two years or so, buzzed in predictable fashion, just as it did when The Young Unknowns Gallery in London had shown Rick Gibson's freeze-dried fetus earrings, a year or so before. But how long ago did Dali and Bunuel drag a Cross through the ant eaten set of *Un Chien Andalou*?

The argument from the intolerant Christian censors seems like something out of Nietzsche — "I am fond of all that is clean, but I have no wish to see the grinning snouts and thirst of the unclean. They cast their eye into the well; now their revolting smile shines up out of the well. They have poisoned the holy water with their lustfulness; and when they call their dirty dreams pleasure, they poison the language too." Perhaps Serrano was attempting to reveal the true intolerance of the Right wing Christian community, but I wonder if this were the case, if such an act reveals anything not already known?

It is at such moments when one is forced to wonder what is going on. Hockney's pools of paint and naked bums are suggestive, mildly interesting, amusing little shifts. Serrano's pool of urine is all that, but it is also an open political statement. Begging wantonly for attention, and the venting of narrow-minded criticism that passes for 'debate'. There is a place for Christ in Western art, and a right for Serrano to cover that image in urine if he so wishes. Indeed, the image may be helpful to some people if it makes them view Christ in more human, fallible, terms. Or if it suggests to them that Christ's image — which is supposed to belong to all of us — is monopolised by a minority and normally used as a symbol of repression, as I discussed earlier. But is this really the best, most noteworthy, most provocative and informative piece of art to come out of America in the last decade? Of course not. But it is the most talked about.

So what? Sometimes I get the feeling that many Artists want nothing other than to be taken as seriously as Scientists, want only the shocking revolutionary fame of Darwin, without the far reaching ideas. In so doing — assuming the role of fine art as being socially akin to that of science or medicine — they are ironically continuing in the tradition of Leonardo.

But Art, which is unmeasurable by any finite methods, often lacking in invention, and certainly rarely influential, is NOT akin to Science. By pretending that it is, certain kinds of artists are merely seeking justification for what many view as their tiresome indulgences,

money (grants) for their pseudo 'research', and the social status enjoyed by people who contribute to the needs of society and have the power to challenge accepted models of the world. The monied, academically powerful artistic community have tried to shun their role as Quarrelsome Entertainers and usurped much of the influence once given to the Church, as Troublesome Priests. But the opportunities this situation offers have — with a few notable exceptions — been wasted in self adoration.

Most avant-garde cultural workers in the visual arts believe in pitching their work at a level that assumes a suggested, but unstated superiority, thus forcing the audience to admit itself to be in some way inadequate and insensitive, or perhaps react by translating it's prejudices and misunderstanding into verbal violence and, as in the Serrano case, censorship. The underlying philosophy seems to compare the Artist with the heretical astronomer, Copernicus. The Artist, too, knows that the Earth revolves around the Sun, and history will one day prove his visions to be 'right', and the 'masses' opinions to be wrong. But, as I said, Art is not measurable.

"These things I do, just to make myself more attractive to you ...  
Have I failed?"

Morrissey, *Last of the Famous International Playboys*

Faced with indifference, many visual artists react like the petulant spoilt children that, in everyday life, many of them are. Namely, they seek out notoriety when fame eludes them, or seems an impossible dream. After all, the contemporary Art World is so easily offended and deliberately offensive, and so utterly obvious. And always trying to justify it's grants, it's social position, it's absurd self esteem, by trying to fulfil some often imagined evolutionary, thought-provoking, avant-garde role. This would all be very well, but most artists do not WANT to overthrow society, nor do they really want to change it. They want to be seen to occupy a specially aware, specially sensitive position WITHIN an unchanging society. Much the same position as the one that appealed to Spiritualists in the last century. "Look at me!"

In calling themselves "artists", they are implying that other people are less sensitive and creative than they are themselves, and in turning out art that is critical or paradoxical, they are often not really informing social change, just trying to increase their own social significance as people of vision and foresight. They imply that it is only they who have a social conscience. Their audience — who 'appreciate' such

ideas — literally buy into the game and bask in the reflected glory. They too must be kinda er, sophisticated and sensitive to dig this junk.

Much contemporary conceptual art, particularly that which is sculptural or performance based, is primarily concerned with 'altering' people's perceptions not of life or society or the universe and their chosen place in it, but of 'altering' the viewer's perception of art itself, and of common everyday images. Serrano himself has — to give him his due — used many images and icons that carry a great deal of representational weight besides his Christ. There is nothing wrong in an artist wanting to question perception, indeed, that is part of his or her function. I would, however, often question the simplistic methods that are involved.

Socially, this kind of art is almost worthless, but it is feted by modern society as it gives the appearance of social and cultural progress and debate. One of the most valued pieces of contemporary art, *Target*, by Jasper Johns, depicts an archery target. Is this a challenge to anyone's perception in the same magnitude of Stephen Hawking's theories relating to Time, or of Herod beheading a saint to fulfill a promise to the daughter he loves? But, I digress slightly.

The appropriation and contextual alteration of everyday social and manufactured images and objects is, anyway, as old as the hills. The dadaists were doing it in the 1920's, and most pop artists made a career out of it in the '60s. And I would question if the viewer of such a work really identifies in any way with the piece itself. More likely, I think, he identifies with the artist, and with the artists words. Serrano, who uses images as the word "image" intended — as a site of conflict - is typical of the artist bred on the myth that says by simply BEING an artist, one can imbue images and objects with power. That idea — that simply by contextualising images behind glass and juxtaposing them, the 'masses' of the late 20th Century Western world will start to question reality — is as dictatorial and pompous as it is ridiculous. For church read museum, for museum read gallery.

In this sense, such conceptual artists can be compared to medieval 'soufflers' — the alchemists who misunderstood the ALLEGORICAL nature of occult texts and tried, like the naive Strindberg or De Rais, literally to alter the physical composition of reality through the chemical wedding of the sublime to the ridiculous.

Activist art — that is, art which aims to be more socially relevant, rebellious and demonstrative than the narcissistic class consciousness garbage that in reality most if it is — should be, primarily, useful.

Apart from challenging one's sensual perceptions, it should threaten the various status quos that exist in art and society. (Disregarding aesthetics for the moment — as many artists do — I can see little point in artists who do not try to threaten, alter or transcend the system when there are so many interior designers about.) But what many 'social' artists ignore is that in the dim witted, big money world of art, such forms of protest are almost automatically degraded by their context and their mannered, self conscious stylism. If such artists were as socially aware as they imply, they would of course know this.

The accepted truth is that the Italian Renaissance embraced the civilised humanistic thought of the era and that this, in some conveniently unspecific way, altered theological thought. It did not. The Church did not 'embrace' humanist tendencies and advances at all. It absorbed them. The arts have always been connected to, and used by, Religion. The root word of 'culture', after all, is the same as that for 'cult' — *colere*, meaning 'to worship'.

The vanishing points of the brilliant Piero de la Francesca led the eye not into infinity, but vanished into the walls of churches, walls that the Church built. The great architecture of the age was used not to house people, but to glorify the church and to literally, physically control the congregation through the use of symbolism and acoustics. (For instance, it has been claimed that hymns performed in such cathedrals were designed deliberately to stimulate the production of endorphines in the human brain, giving the congregation a tiny 'high'). The advances of the Renaissance, sponsored by Rome, did not change the doctrinal belief of the Church, but were used by the Church to increase its power. Caravaggio painting Salome receiving the head of John the Baptist did indeed make for magnificent visuals, but did little to help one with the existential problems one has while sitting on the bus going to work — or church — in the morning.

When viewed in this light, perhaps Serrano is making this point of questioning the Renaissance-inspired perception of Christ. Of wresting Christ from the Temple Priests, and giving him back to the people. The idea and image of Christ does not belong to the Church or to Leonardo, just as Puccini does not belong to the advertising executives of British Airways. Maybe he is just trying to make people think about such a point. But there is an element missing from most 'provocative' contemporary conceptual art that is hard to put a finger on. The element missing is the NEXT sentence, the missing digit in the sum.

Perhaps I'm being guilty of generalising and viewing the Serrano piece in the same jaded way in which I view most activist art works. But given the standard of such work, it's not surprising.

As I have indicated, nowadays it is enough for you to call yourself an activist by producing a piece that will cause some outrage, assuming that that action will automatically be significant in itself. Be criticism of the status quo in itself. But, given the self imposed criteria of such art, it is not enough to be socially aware and juxtapose supposedly important images and words, without having some awareness of what Marx and Engels called "the line of march". That is, some idea of the aims and the ultimate results of the revolution. A little knowledge is, indeed, dangerous, and can be counter productive. And my jaded suspicion is that Serrano seems to know too little, being happy merely to 'offend', and not to question.

Maybe I'm wrong, and this impressionistic journey through America will show me why he did it, but for now the piece seems too calculating to even fit-in with the Dadaist principle, expressed by Grosz, that their art was "done in the dark", flung out to the public via the Cabaret Voltaire and exhibitions, with a degree of naivety that could not predict what seem now to be the inevitable repercussions. Artists who are well known, particularly those operating under the American god of Money cannot, it seems, take many artistic risks, so they now opt instead to take what are seen as being social risks. It is indicative of the lousy situation within both art and society that, even when the risks taken are as tame as the Serrano piece, such a fiery debate is ignited.

There is always a painter or sculptor or writer hanging about, thinking of ways to show how much he hates everybody and everything, who knows how much he should've been appreciated by his peers, loved by his mother, fucked by his girlfriend or boyfriend. A piece of creative nihilism, calculated outrage, or pure violence is normally the answer. "Look at me!" It smugly advertises that the artist knows better, sees differently, points up others hypocrisy, and, most of all, it gets attention. The other half of the equation is always waiting.

There is always some publicity seeking, philistine politician knocking about, who will obediently react to the most prurient pieces of garbage and threaten censorship. This allows a bunch of old pseudo intellectual art victims in poloneck jumpers to forget the bourgeois reality of their social position and don their Cultural Revolutionary guises. For a few months they will bleat in the columns of magazines which nobody reads about the danger of censoring ideas, (as if they



have not already censored the social impact of their ideas by choosing High Cultural avenues of expression) and of society foisting its accepted morality on artists (as if Society's morality was not foisted on everybody anyway).

They do of course have some justification, but, remember, we are looking at artists who are self professed activists involved in avant-garde art at the sharp end of society, and this is OLD news, crumbling data. Of course censorship is difficult for liberal thinkers to accept, as censorship is concerned with limiting the expression of ideas, limiting, in fact, the use of the brain. But do we need to hear any more about Picasso, Caravaggio, Rembradt, Rodin, or Duchamp's urinal to generally justify the art establishments trail-blazing self image and academic existence. And should we defend trivial artists's inalienable right to make arses out of themselves by quoting from interesting artists chapter and verse, and thus investing boring, derivative works of art with a weight which they don't deserve? (Just because The Sex Pistols were briefly the greatest band in the world, does it mean that Slaughter and the Dogs were worthy of life?) There seems to be much Templar-like scrambling towards what Guy DeBord called in *In Girum*, (just) "another evil Grail." Another phoney disney reality. An empty stance. I want to find one avant-garde artist in America about whom I can write home about. Serrano is apparently not he.

In some respects, I have a sneaking wish — for the sake of Art and Society — that all grants made to the Arts were stopped as a result of the Serrano piece, as it would remedy much of the current malady of the Art World. It would remove Washington and Whitehall from the Arts, Rome from the Renaissance.

In the visual arts, there are few cultural terrorists capable of informing any far reaching social and perceptual change, because most artists, like the micro world they inhabit, are parochial, self serving, trained to be incapable of articulation and, although some are able to communicate, rarely have they anything to say. The Art World is rightly criticised because it is normally little more than an acceptable avenue for financial speculation and attention-seeking, but this doesn't really bother me. The Music Industry gets away with it while still half kidding itself that it's somehow important (Bono is a real statesman, man), so why shouldn't the Art World — let them have their fun. No, what dismays me is the common level of stupidity. I'd certainly not agree with the cruel adage that the definition of 'Art' is "Stupidity sent through college", (even if many of the tutors and, worryingly, students you meet are dullards of the highest order who are into Art only for

the prestige and grants) but the general level of debate surrounding the Serrano piece illustrates the current bankruptcy of ideas in the Art World.

There is of course something to be said for creating situations which are designed purely to shock, and situations which are designed purely to provoke people into thought and debate. The principles are to be defended and it is a truism that some things done in the name of Art do have a long term effect, and do filter down through society.

Consecrated shrine or piece of Hollywood Entertainment? Two pennies in a fountain, a thousand coins thrown on the floor, flowers on the altar, blah blah blah. Millions of people actually may think that Christ looks like Leonardo portrayed him, some even think that God is a large man who looks similar to Santa Claus, so in this limited sense the use of Christ's traditional image may be justified by Serrano. After all, the visual, political statements of the Dadaists made all manner of things possible in the arts, and their bastard grandson, Situationism, has been imaginatively credited with numerous social changes, including the Student riots of '68, Baader-Meinhoff, the bombing of MP Robert Carr by The Angry Brigade in 1971, and The Sex Pistols. But it took McLaren's pop sensibilities to put the best parts of Situationism onto the street, and the best parts of Situationism were of course the slogans, the WORDS, and the vague idea that reality was socially conditioned and could be re-sequenced at will. Also, it is of course questionable as to what the Sex Pistols or the Situationist's really achieved socially, but they were at least a phenomenon that contributed to the articulation of a social malaise that already existed. A precious contribution to a vital social attitude, a nice haircut too, but not the originators of any major social or political changes. Unless one really thinks it a key moment in social history to encourage teenagers to sing songs bemoaning their lack of employment, where previous generations of teenagers composed songs complaining about their dreary jobs.

Ideas presented to the world in the straightjacket of high visual art are more fleeting gestures which must lack the higher degree of social impact as enjoyed by Pop Music. This old dilemma must bring into question the motives that drive 'activist artists' like Serrano, or Billie Lynn (who tried to use American flags in her show formed in the shape of labia — gee). They all must know that the cubist's paintings made people change the way they looked at PAINTINGS, and the abstract expressionists did the same, and the Pop artists may have had some effect on how we perceive images in the media, or mass produced objects, and so on, but LITTLE ELSE. And if you hang the American Flag upside-down,

you are still taking part in the pathetic argument that empowers flags with importance, you are still filling-up newspapers with trivial junk when those newspapers could, most would agree, be better used reporting the largely ignored plight of the starving underclass of America for example. When artists and people like myself get smug and think of ourselves as being in there at the sharp end, when we think of ourselves as being anything other than Entertainers, then we should go to a bar in Watts and thank sweet Jesus we have the opportunity to fill our time and our bank accounts by thinking about such comparative trivia.

Art is a social necessity, one that is generally underrated by the public and over rated by the artist. (Avant-garde art — the raising of new questions to challenge old paradigms — is particularly necessary, but, frankly, here in America I can't find any avant-garde art.) Even these limited influences seem to be somewhat in abeyance at present, given the current state of Art here, in the home of the Twentieth Century and its art — the USA. It appears to the untrained eye that the influences and choices and effects sought by most people who call themselves Artists at the tail end of this incredible Century seem remarkably weak and marginal. In art which uses such imagery, these images should surely take-on new meanings and implications, but, like the Souffleur's with their pile of dross, *Piss Christ* does not transform anything without the Prima Materia — the First Matter needed for the transformation - the missing piece of algebra from Serrano's sum: New Ideas.

This would seem to be the problem with the modern conceptual art world. Much thoughtless activity, a bit of ripping, dribbling, and scat, a lot of art's motions being gone through, but nothing happening.

Leaving aside the fact that Serrano's can of worms opened arguments mainly concerned not with censorship, or religion, or even with the way one looks at works of art, but of general arts funding (what really matters in the art world is after all, money) the whole argument seemed remarkably dull.

Despite their mutual pretensions, the overtly political, cock shock artists and PhD rattlers are usually every bit as predictable as those seeking to censor them. What they don't seem to really appreciate is the hard fact that Nobody Cares. As the ubiquitous Raoul Vaneigem said of Mourre, "To piss on the altar is still paying homage to the Church", and now, that Church is empty. So floating an image of Christ in urine may not only be seen as being tedium made flesh, but it could also be seen as being reactionary in the extreme, in that it serves to strengthen those two images — Christ and Piss — by making them

juxtapose. As if they are in any way connected, or opposite. In the context of Serrano consciously choosing his audience of politicians and art bores, rather than patrons of the Hollywood Wax Museum, the two images put together do nothing but entrench and inform extremist, and extremely stupid views of the world, involving by now redundant concepts of 'purity' and 'corruption'. Cleanliness and filth. God and (gasp) Water Sports. It seems that even the most applauded pieces of socially aware art have nothing more than a short lived power to offend stupid old men. There is a world of difference in this and in articulating truths and feelings that people have previously been reluctant to examine. And still more between this and re-organising Society and the Individual's place in it. So, as often happens, what is supposed — I assume — to be *outré* and provoke serious debate, just raises a pointless question and leaves it hanging in the arid air of the arts community, so encouraging a stronger alignment to boring ideas, polarisation, and FORCED CHOICES.

In simple, social terms, it is expedient for some such choices to be made, occasionally lines have to be drawn, and the battle between liberal, artistic rights and reactionary philistine wrongs is politically necessary on occasions. In such a straightforward argument, I would back Serrano to the hilt. But Serrano, and the art academics who defend him, are missing the wider point. The presentation of two choices is not enough anymore, as the System has absorbed both choices. When artists make divisive visual statements they cannot avoid reinforcing concepts of polarisation and confrontation. A reactionary pass-time, as it is clear that the only way forward, the only way in which the human race can progress is to replace, inform, and synthesise.

*Piss Christ* provides an abject lesson in how 'Control' works. Filling up Time with spurious spacejunk. Action and reaction, cause and effect, opposites, good and evil, old moral baggage to be got into by academics, clerics and congressmen. The world of Contemporary Art is usually liberal, rarely liberating. All we get offered are old icons or new diseases.

MARY: "Are you sure it's God. Are you sure it's not the Devil?"

JESUS: "I'm not sure."

MARY "If it's the Devil, the Devil can be cast out."

JESUS: "But what if it's God. You can't cast out God, can you?"

Martin Scorsese, *The Last Temptation of Christ*.

"I didn't want what happened to me to happen. Neoism?! was given to me. A gift from God or the devil, but something I didn't want."

Monty Cantsin

The power of Christ's image may be stronger and more apparent in America than it is in Britain, as a phenomenal percentage of Americans are in some way practising Christians, but it still would seem that too many otherwise clever people in the supposedly modern Art World are using old paradigms, decaying social dialects. Serrano's piece is more 'interesting' than anything else seen in New York for months. And that is the problem. Old hardware. That is why a lot of contemporary art is 'misunderstood' by 'the public' — because it's too introverted and intellectually simple, and often too visually subjective to be viewed on any other level. In this sense, *Piss Christ* appeals to the lowest, most common denominators. Those which prompt a startling 380,000 salivating Christians to write indignant letters to the South Eastern Centre for Contemporary Art protesting Serrano's profanity, and art critics, lecturers, and other self-appointed 'anointed ones' dismissing such feelings out of hand as being worthless. As an old cut-up recorded by William Burroughs and Gregory Corso once said, "Understanding out of date". After all, unless they find Spock's rejuvenating Genesis Effect from *Star Trek 3*, both Mapplethorpe — and Christ — are dead.

### THREE STIGMATA IN CALIFORNIA

"You who are girdled with ice,  
by such fire consumed ..."

Puccini — *Turandot*

Of course, there are many ways involving both sorcery and surgery to bring people back from the dead, and all the necromancer's arts are practised here in California. One method is cryogenics, wherein the dead person is frozen by men in white coats ('Scientists') and 'woken up' decades or even centuries later, when a cure for their terminal illness is found. Walt Disney was supposedly one such person currently living in what Alice Cooper termed his Refrigerated Heaven, though, in fact, the Disney freeze was a myth. Though other famous believers include the writer Robert Anton Wilson, who expounded cryogenic techniques in his excellent books, most notably the seminal, essential, *Cosmic Trigger*.

When, after completing the book, Wilson's daughter was killed in one of California's numerous armed robberies, he had no hesitation in paying Cryonics Internment Inc. to freeze her corpse. Little did he then know that, by the early '80s, the company had gone bust and allowed their 'clients' to melt. Money buys you more of everything in California. Poor Wilson was left to mourn twice.

Such unfortunate publicity has done little to further the idea of cryonics to the American public, though the science is far from finished. For as little as \$100,000 one can still go to the Alcor Life Extension Foundation in Riverside, here in California, and now also in England, and get 'suspended' after death.

The process is quite simple, in theory. As an Alcor subscriber, you carry a disc around your person in case of death; this shows that you wish to be suspended and bears Alcor's phone number. When the company is called, a team is dispatched to pack your body in ice. You are then rushed to the Foundation's clinic, where your body is plugged into a life support machine. A hole is drilled in your groin and your blood is then washed out, bringing the temperature of your body down rapidly. Your breastbone is then cut open and tubes carrying an anti-freeze liquid made of glycerol and sucrose is pumped into you via your heart. Depending on how much, or more to the point, how little you've paid, your head may then be sawn off (if you've only opted for the 'neuro' scheme you pay less, but your body is left to rot). A hole is then drilled in your head so that the state of your perfusion and blood wash-out can be checked. A thermometer is then stuffed into the hole in your skull and you are then put in a plastic bag and floated in a bath of silicone oil, taking your temperature down to 77 degrees centigrade in 72 hours. You're then placed in a pre-cooled sleeping bag on a stretcher, and plopped into a large vacume flask of liquid nitrogen, in which you cool down to minus 196 degrees and float, float on... until such time as you are revived.

Alcor have been experiencing a few legal problems. Even in the State of California, you need to have a death certificate issued before you can be decapitated with legal impunity. In 1988 the death of Dora Kent caused the company some difficulties. The coroner wanted her body, saying that the 83 year old lady may have died of barbiturates given to her by Alcor members. He wanted the body for an autopsy. Dora's son, Saul, said that they couldn't have it. Mrs Kent had been taken to the Alcor facility when she was dying, but they had waited until her heart stopped beating before they had chopped off her head

and given it the suspension treatment — just as Mom would have wanted. The Commandments say it all.

The head vanished. Police raided Alcor, confiscated their computer records and made six arrests; but still Dora's head remained 'lost', no doubt floating blissfully in some cold Californian bath, awaiting the 21st Century alarm call. Alcor sued the FBI, the Riverside Health Department said that if Alcor have bodies and heads floating around in their well guarded tanks then they are breaking local health and safety laws. The debate goes on.

What Human Rights do dead (or, undead) people have? Shouldn't they be allowed to be suspended and have the last laugh? Of course they should. But it's not for me.

In Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, you may recall that Faust sells his soul to the Devil in return for magickal powers and privilege. Summoning Helen of Troy from her age old slumber, he then predictably seeks eternal life through her immortal kiss. Later, sad and regretful, he is shocked when Mephistopheles returns for his payment. There is no such thing as a free lunch, or life.

Cryonics fans, looking for a kiss, never seem to mention the fact that, soon after death, your brain cells start to die too, and, regardless of future technological advances, the information which they retained is probably irretrievable. So, even if the process works and you can find a spare body lying around onto which future super surgeons can graft and revive your head — and cure you of that malignant carcinoma which you died of to boot — how would you like to wake up in 2090 when all your friends and family are long dead, into a totally alien world peopled by your aging grandchildren? Not that you would know who your grandchildren or anyone else were, as you would quite possibly be little more than a vegetable, living life in some distant dismal coma, having been plucked from the gates of Heaven. (There is a novel there somewhere, but I'm sure it's already been written.)

## THIS MAY BE HEAVEN OR THIS MAY BE HELL...

Our fiction and factual history is alive with ghosts, zombies, the undead, those who have been resurrected, cloned, robotised and rebuilt. Because, in the spiritless, fleshy world of the West, we are generally terrified of ceasing to exist. For me, one of the best, trickiest writers of such life/death scenarios was another Californian resident, Philip K

Dick. Dick is famous for two reasons. One, he appeared in the first edition of *Rapid Eye* magazine in 1979, and two, he was by far and away the best SF writer on this "or any other" planet.

Dick's best books — *Ubik*, *Flow my tears the Policeman said*, *Do Androids dream of Electric Sheep?*, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldrich*, — were among the first novels I read. I think it was those books that hinted to me that Time and Life are circular and, if your Perception is purely linear, you will only experience one tiny sliver of the circle. What a hippy.

Mostly rush-written as cheap pulp fiction in the '50s and '60s, Dick became a cult writer of the early '70s in Britain, a well thumbed copy of such gems as *The Turning Wheel*, *The Man in the High Castle* or *Dr. Futurity* being as essential a fashion accessory to wasted white art school boys as a copy of Roxy Music's first album. But Philip Kendrick Dick deserved whatever popularity he got by being — along with Alfred Bester — a writer who used the generally appalling serious SF genre to spark the human imagination away from the drudgery of everyday perception. His plots never relied on tedious technology and fancifully named planets. To Dick, what counted was ideas, altered states, love and life under pressure. The Science Fiction element being used, as it should, only as a vehicle which to create new, internal worlds. Worlds not of outer, but of inner space. The universe in the minds of men. His anti-heroes were normal, boring, fallible, mistake ridden men who learned to cope in the most weird and extraordinary of circumstances. Humans under stress, again, whose perceptions were challenged by those old favourites, Space, Drugs, Love and, in his later work, Religion.

Most popular Science Fiction nowadays is overblown Dungeons and Dragons fantasy trash of the type Heavy Metal Horror fans, and aficionados of crappy B movies adore. Although those weaned on the Classics would rather die than admit to even reading it, Philip K Dick's visions and versions of a future present — that is, an inner turmoil — are as good, if not better, than any dystopia dreamed up by Orwell or Burgess, Huxley or Vonnegut. His plots took place in future societies whose worldviews were governed by the distorting influences of idiosyncratic messiahs. His heroes were little scraps of humanity seen living under such madness. We all teeter on the edge of our own insanity. Whereas Serrano passes comment on 'social reality' and becomes a world famous blasphemer, in practically all his novels, Dick mirrored the world by juxtaposing TWO LEVELS OF REALITY. One which



is objectively perceived, the other which was determined by the processes of other people.

Perhaps not surprisingly Dick, so rumour has it, spent a lot of his time taking unusual drugs, extracted from sheeps glands, with Dr. John Lilley and Al Ackerman. The former a revolutionary psychologist, the latter a mad, bad and dangerous to know mail-artist. Lilley was among the first to perceptively investigate the intelligences of non-humans, such as Whales and Dolphins, and Al Ackerman — a member of Fluxus and co-founder of Neoism — is a practitioner of what he calls 'rotational situationism', which apparently involves things such as; "get rid of door to door salesmen by ending each sentence with the word 'tooth'" He is probably best known for the piece he wrote while working as an Orderly in a local hospital. It was called *The Hamburger Lady*.

"...By far the worst is the hamburger lady, and because of the shortage of 'qualified technicians', e.g. technicians who can work with her and keep their last meal down, Screwloose Lauritzen and I have been alternating nights with her, unrelievedly. If you put a 250lb meatloaf in the oven and then burned it and then followed that by propping it up on a potty chair to greet you at 11 pm each night, you would have some description of these past two weeks. Which is to say the worst I seen since the viet napalms. When somebody tells you that there is a level of pain beyond which the human mind cannot retain consciousness, please tell them to write me. In point of fact this lady has not slept more than 3-5 minutes at a stretch since she came to us — that was over two weeks ago and, thanks to medical advances, there is no end in sight; from the waist (waste?) up everything is burned off, ears, nose etc. — lower half is untouched and that, I guess, is what keeps her alive. I took one guy in to help me change the tubes and he did alright, that is alright till he came out, the he spotted one of the burn nurses (pleasant smiling zombies) eating a can of chili-mac at the desk, and that did it: he flashed on the carpet. It is fucking insane is what it is."

Al Ackerman is still producing his artwork, Lilley still penning thought-provoking books; the story of their friend though, has an unhappy ending. Philip K Dick dies while Warner Brothers start filming a cinematic version of *Do Androids..* starring Harrison Ford, confusingly calling it the more snappy *Blade Runner* after the story by Bill Burroughs. International stardom and a scriptwriter's home in

Long Beach or Beverley Hills was never really on for Dick. He was too much of an outsider. Like John Lilley and Al Ackerman, he saw too much, and his vision of the world was never edited to fit-in with what others saw, what others were supposed to want to read, what 'Society Expected'. Unlike Leonardo, that's why he was, in his own words, a crap artist.

When you roll past Rod Stewart's home in Beverley Hills, you wonder if Philip K Dick — a classical music fanatic and man of consummate good taste — would have wanted to live here in Hollywood anyway. Money is never disgusting, people who waste and flaunt it almost always are. Barbara Streisand has an Estate in Beverley Hills on which stand five mansions. When Babs gets bored with one, she simply moves into another for a few weeks, and so on. The talentless (Zsa Zsa Gabor) live cheek by jowl with the tasteless (Pia Zadora) in Beverley Hills, a honeysuckled overpriced suburban ghetto where the local policemen are paid \$50,000 a year and arrest anyone caught committing the crime of WALKING in the neighbourhood.

Prince's house used to be painted purple (he's very original like that), and the ex-home of Marilyn Monroe is small and sad and somehow as you'd expect. Mick Jagger's house, on the other hand, is very big, but has been empty since he bought it three years ago, but nobody seems to have told that to some of the tourists who hop off the tour coaches and surreptitiously root through the binliners of his, and others, homes. (Englebert Humperdink, I'm told, recently complained about the excessive security arrangements of his neighbours but got short shrift, the neighbours being Ron and Nancy Reagan, whose dustbins are definitely out of bounds). At the gates to each house is a sign from a local private security firm, warning potential trespassers of an "Immediate Armed Response" should the householder press their panic button and want you removed. I notice that nobody in Hollywood wears Charles Manson T-shirts.

In the main, Beverley Hills is something akin to Egypt's Valley of the Kings — all the really glamorous inhabitants are either dead or have been moved on. Tutenkhamen on a blockbusting tour of the world's smartest museums and Errol Flynn, like Christ, to the Wax Museum on Hollywood Boulevard. Culture, Religion and Entertainment, the trinity of the West, all set down in museums. And all most artists can think to do is press their faces against the glass, not, as many people think, because they are natural 'outsiders' in the vein of Camus's Meursault, but because they are desperate to be invited in, accepted, placed on a plinth or in a sarcophagus or nailed to a wall or floated in

a tank of urine. Or, if they really make it, left to rot in a mansion on Laurel Canyon, or, depending on their medium, in one of the dozens of chic 'artists colonies' up the coast, having 'arrived'. California is peopled by 'creative' types who want nothing more than to be as rich and famous — and useless — as the Queen of England. Made safe, innocuous, irrelevant, distant, inhuman, graven, wax. What do you do when you have five houses? Make a record saying you feel isolated and empty, and buy your sixth. Perhaps Philip K Dick was lucky.

A few hundred yards down the road, and you are out of Beverley Hills and back in Hollywood. Sunset Strip is a huge disappointment. A few unexceptional restaurants, a few famous nightclubs that have seen better days, like The Whiskey and The Roxy, from which I steal an ashtray to replace a broken one at home that someone stole for me on a visit here in 1977 — and only one sleazy sex bar.

Not being able to resist it, I enter for free and buy a drink from a semi naked barmaid, then take a seat near the catwalk with the other customers. Fat, dull looking cunts of both sexes can bemoan the dictated myth of beauty all they like, but a PERFECT-looking blonde strides up and down the stage like a caged panther, obligatory high heels clicking as she skips across the boards. She is obviously a dancer and an athlete as she proves by climbing up a fire station pole and sliding down it using only her legs as a grip, then cartwheeling along the catwalk, landing in the splits next to a tired looking accountant. He smiles as she stands on her head and opens her legs in front of him, then he throws her a five dollar bill. Moving, dancing and gyrating along the catwalk she works her way methodically around the whole audience, all of whom seem to throw five dollar notes as if they were going out of fashion.

This feels degrading, uncomfortable, embarrassing and, more to the point, potentially expensive.

I throw a dollar and leave.

Cracking under the Californian sun, Los Angeles is the most beautifully illuminated, unimaginably dull city in the world, offering suburban vistas of uninterrupted nothingness not experienced by this writer ever before. No wonder so many people abuse drugs out here. I have seen the past, and it does not work. L.A. is such an old fashioned idea of what a brave new city should be.

However hideous, Hollywood is something of a idyllic town marooned on the sea of the smoggy megalopolis of giant freeways and lowrise monotony of the rest of L.A. Like most of southern California,

it is locked in a dusty time warp, circa 1972. Denis Hopper bikers trying to look like Peter Fonda bikers are everywhere, cavorting with pimply peroxide blonde girls in tastefully torn pink leopard-print T-shirts and spray-on white jeans. MOR rock blares from each of the radio stations, which pump out Jethro Tull, the Doobies, Peter Frampton and the inevitable Doors as though tomorrow never came. Whatever moves have been made in musical terms have been forgotten, squandered, recuperated. But this music is so right for L.A., who am I to argue?

I swear that I see the late Mama Cass one night before I turn the corner and find a nightclub. Once inside I see that it is, in fact, nothing more than a glorified cupboard with a few stools scattered around the beer sodden floor and a jukebox in the corner. Sweets' *Blockbuster* and Alice Coopers' *School's Out* play as people with long hair and very thin limbs wobble their backsides around, swigging from bottles of Bud in unison. Like it or lump it, this is rock'n'roll USA. A guy stumbles over to me and tells me that he likes my tattoo. Then he smiles and shows me his. Both designs are almost identical, only mine is slightly better as it was done by London's finest, Mr. Sebastian (recently arrested for cock-piercing by police who one would have thought had something better to do). The coincidence proves me to be completely unoriginal. To my new friend, it is an event of cosmic significance.

"Fuckin' far-out" "Yeah". "Hey man, that's really fuckin' far-out". "Hmmm yes I know." "Really though man, that's fuckin' far-out.... I mean, really..."

It turns out that most of 'the kids' here have just been to see The Cure. I ask where they were playing, the Roxy or Whiskey or surely not the Hollywood Bowl. No, The Cure have just played to seventy thousand people in some stadium outside of town. The last time I spoke to Robert Smith he was lying on the floor of the town square in Ghent, Belgium, drunk and trying to eat greasy chips while discussing the implications of *Killing an Arab*. A pleasant, normal lad with a girlfriend back home in Horley, to 'the kids' here he is every bit as important as Jesus Christ, because they can identify with him. As I sit in a drunken haze I wonder what on earth these kids have in common with Smith, who sits reading Mervyn Peake in Sussex, then I remember something from the Twilight Zone. That last night I saw Smith, we'd been to a nightclub with Lol Tolhurst and Smith had badgered the DJ all night with requests for Alvin Stardust and Sweets' *Ballroom Blitz*. But Rod Serling and Arthur Koestler be damned, tonight's coincidences can be explained away quite easily. Pop culture, tattoos, the radar-for-rubbish activated by beer and searches at the jukebox are, more than anything,

what we British share with America. The 'special relationship', amazingly, does exist. It's political (the UK is still more politically important to America than Germany), economic (Britain is by far the largest oversea's investor) and, with over forty percent of Americans still claiming not just British, but English roots, racial. Primarily, though, our relationship is cultural, and expressed best in the realm of pop.

There is a commotion outside and two of the bouncers lock the doors. From outside, some raised voices tell the people inside the club that they're all as good as dead. The barman rushes over to phone the cops, someone says "he's got a gun". In five seconds flat, I'm sober. Then, as quickly as it started, it's finished. People resume dancing, the doors are unlocked, I ask the barman what happened. "Just some assholes," he says. I cover the two mile walk back to my hotel with what feels like a poker stuck against my spine, and the tiny hairs on my neck bristling. Why do you never see a cop when you need one?

### NOTES FROM THE UNDERGROUND

"How long the night of my pain Lord,  
And short the days of my joy?  
Why does darkness shroud my soul at noon  
And the light stop at my doorway?  
Is it my knees You want me to bend?  
Is it my will You would have me surrender?  
O Lord

O Lord

How short the days of my joy?  
How long the nights of my despair?"

*PSALM III* — Hubert Selby Jr.

Among the suntans and muscles of California, Hubert Selby Jr., a small, gaunt asthmatic, seems somewhat out of place. Selby, a Brooklynite who now lives here in Hollywood on North Orlando, never developed the pop star persona of Burroughs or Bukowski, but as a writer of fiction that gives insights to the grimy underbelly of America, is easily their equal.

As a boy sailor working on Dredgers, then Liberty ships in his teens, he contacted T.B. in Germany at eighteen and was given three months to live. The experience changed his life. After having part of a lung removed and spending three years in a hospital bed, spending his

time reading and, as writers should, observing, Selby found himself back in his native Brooklyn, sharing a bar with the writer Gil Sorrento. Sorrento became his mentor, Selby became self-educated, alcoholic, and wrote one of the most important novels of the decade. I read *Last Exit to Brooklyn* as a boy of sixteen, attracted to the 75 pence paperback largely because of the words "POST-TRIAL EDITION. COMPLETE AND UNEXPURGATED" that were emblazoned across the cover. I loved it and lent it to my disbelieving friends. They loved it too.

Although brimming-over with descriptive sex and violence, drug abuse, dirt, and the grinding blackness caused by poverty, addiction and broken dreams, *Exit* is one of the most moralistic books you could ever read. Moral in the sense that mirrors the reality of decadence, but does not judge it. His other books—*The Room*, *Demon*, *Requiem for a Dream* and *Song of the Silent Snow*, continue the themes. Selby's characters are down-trodden, alienated, fearful, and breathing on an atmosphere of violence that pervades all big cities like smog. But Selby's characters have something else in common. They are all SEARCHING for something. Men possessed by demons; addictions to alcohol, sex, gambling. They are men who are self conscious and guilty, and trapped in a cycle of obsession and regret. They lack any control over their lives, and the 'rooms' which they inhabit may be viewed from a barstool or, just as well, a cell bunk or deadend job or an unhappy marriage. They yearn to escape but find themselves too fearful or content to try.

"So you just better believe boy,  
somebody's gonna get hurt tonight."

*Factory* — Bruce Springsteen

Despite the obvious morality of such tales, *Last Exit* was tried under the obscenity laws in England and, despite being defended by the likes of John Mortimer and Anthony Burgess, was found to be "obscene" at the Old Bailey in June of 1967. Selby joins Joyce and D H Lawrence, I squirm, and as usual, the law in England is made to look an ass. *Honi soit qui mal y pense.*

The book was acquitted in the Court of Criminal Appeal a year later, and now has been made into a film by Uli Edel. I can't see how anyone could do the book justice on film, but it has been called "a 100 minute jean commercial studded with set-piece ultraviolence." I can't wait. (I should have. Since writing, I've seen the film version and my highly honed, well expressed critical appraisal of it is that it's complete shit.)

## PERFORMANCE (Sang d'un Poete)

"I don't think I'm going to let you stay in the film business."

Also living in Hollywood, on Barton Avenue, is Kenneth Anger. Nowadays, he's best known for his legendary gossip bibles, *Hollywood Babylon I* and *II*. (According to an unpublished piece by Dale Ashmun of *Oui* magazine, the famous 'missing' photo on page 285 of *Babylon II* is of Marlon Brando, or someone very much like him, performing fellatio — he says Anger showed it to him). Although now rich and famous for his dirt-digging, it should not be forgotten that Anger is also one of the most influential independent film-makers to come out of America.

His own film work was as highly symbolic as it was highly tinted. A reflective documentary of decadent America, alive with icons snapped from the sickbed of California. Like Warhol's, his films were avant-garde, and walked the fine line between boring self-indulgence and Vision — often unsuccessfully. And, like Warhol, Jack Smith, and a few other American film-makers, his art is highly contextualised and quite magickal.

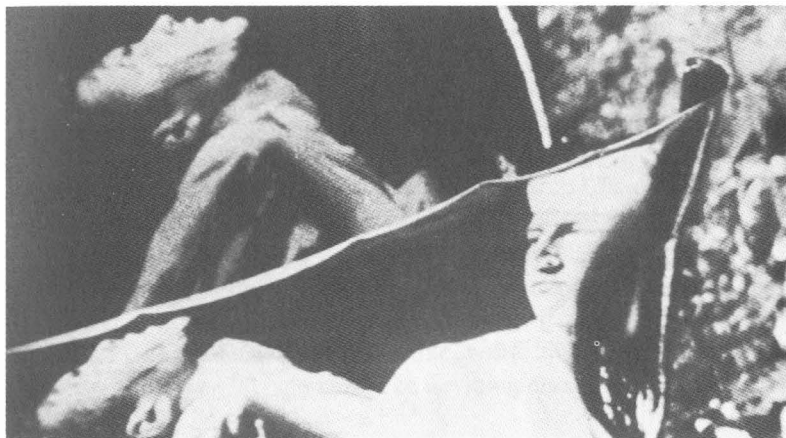
He made his first film, a black and white short called *Fireworks* in 1947, when he was only seventeen. It became quite a famous little movie, because it was supported by none other than Jean Cocteau, on whose *Blood of a Poet* it was partly based. That Cocteau was a magician, and an important one at that, we already know. He has, as I have said, been listed in some occult documents as being leader of the Prieure de Sion — the secret masonic sect, descended from the Knights Templar, which guards some great secret. Looking at Anger's work, the influence of Cocteau, and the occult connections, are glaringly obvious.

Anger was one of the first of many contemporary artists who were obsessed with Aleister Crowley, and used his films as Crowley used his texts, poems and rituals — to create a (cinematic) range of symbolic correspondences.

The interest in the occult of experimental artists in general, and film-makers in particular, is by now traditional. In many instances, this may often merely be due to the fact that some artists want to qualify their work in something other than 'artistic' terms so as to add weight to their opinions, but Maya Deren, Cerith Wyn Evans, Hollis Frampton, Derek Jarman and others have drawn on occult imagery and ritual as a system for depicting an interior state, and a utopianist social change.



*Kenneth Anger*

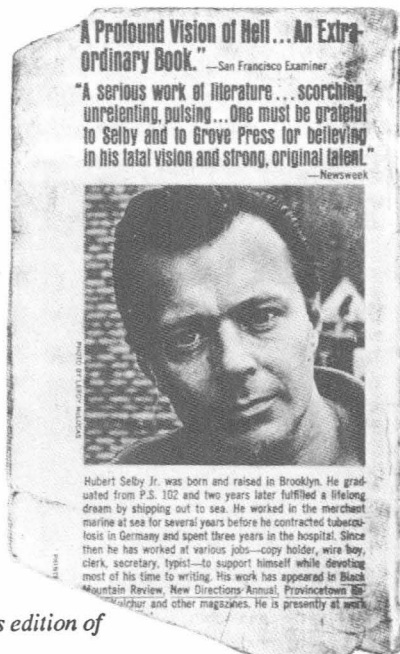


*Still from Kenneth Anger's Fireworks, 1947*





Jayne Mansfield



Back cover of original Grove Press edition of  
Last Exit To Brooklyn

But Anger went one step further, using symbolism and ritual not only as allegory, or as a trendy signal of attitude, but to MAKE his films INTO ritual and, quite literally, cast a spell on his audience.

*Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome*, *My Daemon Brother*, *Scorpio Rising* and *Lucifer Rising* are all obvious examples. Naturally, Anger's influence in the world of experimental film, underground art and rock'n'roll (all supposedly rebellious, liberating, somehow millarian pursuits) is immense, as can be seen by his list of collaborators — Mick Jagger, Anton LaVey, Bobby Beausoleil, Anita Pallenberg, Jimmy Page, Marianne Faithful — all of whom at some stage shared Anger's interest in Crowley.

The image of Crowley as a more subversive, mystical Oscar Wilde type figure has been hugely popular among angry young men and women who find themselves at odds with the bible, as personified by the Mick Jagger character, having sex among the velvet cushions of a Powis Square mansion, in Nik Roeg's brilliant epitaph to the '60s, *Performance*. Although much of Crowley's work was egotistical rubbish, it was through Crowley and the wide-eyed occultniks I met in the late '70s that I stumbled upon the first cohesive expressions of a non-Christian, joyfully indulgent humanism — just what you need during your late teens, in fact..

Just as Victor Hugo (coincidentally, another former leader of the Priory of Zion) or Gustave Moreau have been credited with an influence over the founding of surrealism, Anger can be said to be one of the fore-runners of the use of montage in the cinema. ( Actually, the comparisons with Moreau don't stop there — Anger also strikes me as being mysogenistic, and, like the painter, a sometimes over-ambitious perfectionist whose great famous works — Moreau's *Les Chimeres* or Anger's version of Lautreamont's *Les Chants de Maldoror*, or even *Lucifer Rising* — remain lost or unfinished.)

Unlike many of the copyists, Anger's overlaid 'subconscious' image montages are relevant, telling, illustrations of, and from, American life. As Anger, like Dali, combined his art to his tarot-like system of correspondences and his own astute, witty, and very black awareness of reality, they could hardly be anything else.

## MIRROR IN THE BATHROOM

“.... the door is locked, just you and me...”

*Scorpio Rising*, his most famous film, was at the core of Kenneth Anger. Not an image FOR the unblinking TV eye, crafted on the Dream Factory floor and designed to strengthen the flat mediated reality of America, but an image from BEHIND the retina, from America's collective, supposedly innocent unconscious. The images used in the film were themselves the result of some artistic serendipity. While filming it, a processing lab accidentally sent Anger a reel of film from a cheap Christian picture called *Road to Jerusalem*. Anger cut it up, tinted it blue, and overlaid it onto *Scorpio*, which he'd filmed at a bike gang's Halloween party. The resulting movie bristles with icons like the cast of the Hollywood Wax Museum.

The 'crucified' Giant image of James Dean, Marlon Brando in *The Wild Ones*, Hitler, Christ, idols appearing on the character Scorpio's portable TV set and around the idolised Harley Davidson — it's chrome reflecting the lasting image of 20th Century art and occultism. That is, as Anger says, the 'daemon brother', the dream lover, the narcissistic double of adolescent homoeroticism and Sixties humanist worship, what the clones saw in the full frontal mirrored toilets at London's Heaven nightclub. Almost real: The reflection is of Kenneth Anger himself.

The songs, *He's a Rebel*, *Torture*, and *I will Follow Him*, obviously give a linkage between Christ and Dean and Brando. Who Anger says are “human idols idolised by idiots ... The different degree of impact each had being dependent on the degree of advertising between pop stars and Christ.”

Like *The Book of the Law*, *Scorpio* depicts the end of Christendom — the Age of Pisces — through the medium of a biker riding towards death, or the enlightenment of the birth of Scorpio/Horus/Humanism. Lucifer is reinterpreted and reborn, from the misunderstandings of Christianity, that had him figured as Satan — rather than Rex Mundi, the most human god.

The new aeon rises like a phoenix from among the death of old icons, the death of the Self, and the chaotic oblivion caused by change and progress, by Niels Bohr and the new physicists, by Crowley or the New Agers. The age when the world need not be as sad as it seems.

*Scorpio* is a million miles away from the usual glamorised violence that spews out from here in Hollywood. Its sex, sado masochism, homoeroticism, angst, drug-taking, suggested violence and, ultimately, death, is by contrast dirty, dull, and — like death itself — very ordinary. This stylised but realistic treatment of sex and violence is why Anger — like Selby — is a worrying figure to many critics. His sexually ambiguous, ironic use of the song *Blue Velvet* in the soundtrack to *Scorpio* was surely an inspiration to David Lynch, who filmed *Blue Velvet* years later. Lynch, who had already made the harrowing *Eraserhead* and *The Elephant Man*, caused more outrage with *Velvet* because its sex and violence, sending up a genre, went against Hollywood's obsessional glamorisation of the subjects.

Lynch's violence worked because of its attention to DETAIL. Because it's atmosphere echoed the queasy feeling of inevitability that is invoked when violence is coming. That common, matter-of-fact uneasiness that engulfs you when violence is thick in the air is present in *Blue Velvet*. The fear and loathing in L.A. that I briefly sniffed last night at the club off Hollywood Boulevard. It's a funny feeling, one that actually makes you want to laugh, if only to release the tension.

When violence does happen, there is a glint, a single split second of cracked time in the pre-ambles to the physical violence that is the point of no return. When the ritualised taunting, insults, glances, and forced laughter freezes in dry throats and white eyes. It is a moment that rockets tension and is in itself a contributor to the violence, which comes almost as a relief after the moment's brief, embarrassing, stranglehold. Lynch caught that moment. Too real for Hollywood, as Hollywood hates reality. As with Lynch, so with Anger.

Within Anger, such moments of change are caught and released on film — his viewer is not allowed to forget or turn away. Nor is the audience able to distinguish between the icons of Hollywood and those of Christianity, the real and the imaginary, the Christian reel and the Gay Bikers reel, *The Road to Jerusalem* or the road to Damascus, or, some would say, Hell.

But even with Kenneth Anger, as with Christ, I find disappointment. The flash of Enlightenment is not found in the journey, the life, the biker's ritual — but in death. Crowley's promised age of Horus, the Do-What-You-Will philosophy dictated by Aiwass on some dark Cairo night ends up just there — in darkness, ends up just the same as Christianity, where you have to "slip the bonds of Earth" in order to touch the face of God. In the penultimate section of *Scorpio Rising*,

Scorpio urinates on the altar of a church. But there is little defiance, no public ground gained, as the church is empty. And, "to piss on the altar is still paying homage to the church." Scorpio gets on his bike, rides off, and ... dies. The last expression of Haight Ashbury or Powys Square is a boarded-up house, a deserted church, a hitch-hike to an old film set in Death Valley, the auto destruction of heroes. Be they the biker character of Scorpio in *Rising*, or Jimmy Page's friends in hotel rooms, or Brian Jones' floating, chlorinated head of hair, or Crowley — dead sybarite among the long shadows of a cheap Sussex boarding house in a heroin haze. As Bobby Beausoleil discovered, the world can be as sad as it seems. "And I can still see blue velvet through my tears."

### ONCE THAT RAGED, THE SEA THAT RAGED NO MORE (LIKE THE VIDEO FILMS WE SAW)....

"I like to drive along the freeways/See the  
smokestacks belching/breaths turn brown, so  
warm and so brown/I'm buried deep in mass  
production/you're not nothin' new."

Iggy Pop — *Mass Production*

Before the smog and claustrophobia and boredom of Hollywood kills us we hire a rent-a-wreck and drive, up the craggy Californian coast, towards San Francisco. People may be starving, but the Diners dotted along Route 1 have food mountains that would make even the European Community blush. Here, everything is yours, so fuck the starving millions, what do they think *We are the World* was for? As a race, Americans are the flabbiest people in the world, because, it seems, the more one has, the more one has to flaunt. The blubber mountain that is America's Youth acts as a kind of sign telling the country that everything is alright with the world, because America can afford to be fat and ugly and, therefore, independent of the rest of the planet's people. Indeed, although it is wrong to generalise, it seems to me that the level of ignorance about world affairs here would be unbelievable to the averagely informed European. America is big enough and rich enough, for now, to be illiterate and insular. But like the British Empire that dominated the world before it, it is slowly learning that the world has a life of it's own. Britain ruled a quarter of the world, gave it away to

pay-off economic and political debts made to the US during the wars, and still worries about it. Now America inherits the world and finds that the world is dying at it's feet.

Americans' reaction to this enormous responsibility seems to have been to revert to childhood. The language here is juvenile, the TV is juvenile, America can't grow up. Here, everything is fluffy and "nice". "Candy" could only be a word invented in America. Bank managers in 500 dollar three piece suits complete the ensemble with baseball hats and bubble-gum. Grown men in restaurants screech and shout like schoolboys rolling in a mudbath as the waitress pours the syrup on their pancakes. Eddie Murphy cracks a joke about sitting on the bog and the audience dissolve into high-pitched whoowww-ing sounds. The President of the United States says that things are "scary". When one takes some clothes into a dry cleaners they say "yew wan'em folded and fluffed?" The Easter Egg is replaced with a rabbit which they refer to as a "bunny". Every situation comedy on television is peopled with "cute" children, and one of the nation's favourite meals is "finger-lickin' good". And here, in the most powerful country on Earth, the whole nation celebrates the birthday of a cartoon mouse. God help us.

San Simeon is a discreet dot on the map of the Pacific coast. When you park your car you can't help but notice a row of metal telescopes by the car lot, cocked and out of use, like rusting antique cannons. As always, such abandoned objects whisper to you.

The (few) locals here make their living out of tourism. Travelers stop over in San Simeon to lounge on the windswept beach and watch the wildlife being wild under the balmy Pacific sunsets. Squirrels, pelicans and seals outnumber the people, who smile benevolently as their furry, feathered friends steal the food from their picnic hampers. It was not always so. San Simeon was not always a tourist spot. The town was made by whalers.

Boats, bristling with harpoons would launch from this beach every time a lookout spotted a passing school of whales as they migrated south for the winter. But now, the whaling has stopped, and the people of San Simeon, in their ethnic craft and sea shell shops, would not dream of harpooning such a creature. In the space of just one generation, they have, as a whole community, changed their perception. Or at least, altered their morality to fit in both with the more enlightened views, and pragmatic demands of the age. Pragmatic because along the beachhead is that line of coin-operated telescopes

of the kind that make a ticking, whirring sound when in use. Contraptions that show you a clear reflection of your eyelash against a black unfocused haze when you put your money in and try to look through them. When I was a child visiting any such beauty spots, I used to get bored and hide under a blanket, feeling out of place as I didn't want to join-in the beach games. But, at least there were always telescopes, just as there was always a queue to use such wonderful machines. In the Sixties and Seventies, after San Simeon's whaling fleet had been scuppered, these telescopes too had been busy with people using them to look just a mile out into the glistening platinum coloured ocean and see the families of whales as they swam past the beach. Now, here in San Simeon, the line of telescopes are deserted, and stand like a row of dead trees in the sunshine.

As Science Officer Spock said of Earth's whaling in *Star Trek* 4, "What is the point of farming an animal to extinction?" But you just feel like forgetting the logic of the argument and asking. What have we done?

Emotions aside for one moment, standing in the hard sunlight on this empty beach looking seaward, I wonder what messages — if any — are coursing around the ocean, from one whale to the next, about we humans.

Although whales and dolphins may not be quite as intelligent as we once thought they were, and although I think it unlikely that they are descended from the visitors from a planet near Sirius B (the mysterious Dog Star of the Dogon), as I have heard suggested, I do get the impression that, on some level, even animals who have had no direct contact with Man are cognisant of the fact that he is a vicious and untrustworthy creature.

Despite the conferences and bans, even now thousands of whales, dolphins and porpoises are killed every year; either harpooned, stabbed, clubbed or drowned in fishing nets. The worst culprits are the Japanese fishermen, who have demonstrated no respect for international agreements made to govern international waters, and who should therefore be made to suffer the consequences by nothing short of a boycott of their nation's goods. If the matter is considered as serious enough for one to demonstrate about, why is it not serious enough for a boycott of Sony and Nissan?

The Japanese have a different attitude towards the Earth than many people in the West, informed by ancient cultural differences, and there may be some incredulity in the minds of some old Japanese

fishermen when the West tells the country to stop being so barbaric, not least for reasons of that August day in 1946.

In the case of the quite moronic and bloodthirsty Faroe islanders, no such considerations exist, and the taking of more direct action is a temptation. Having ignored all efforts to bring them to their senses, these people continue the barbaric and pointless slaughter of whales and dolphins, who they enjoy rounding-up in a bay and hacking or beating to death. Of course, what the Faroe Islanders get up to in their own country is beyond our control, and the social codes of larger nations, such as Britain or the States, should not be foisted upon anybody. Stupid activity should, however, be made to look stupid. Communication and education are, as always, the only long term answers.

The quite dumb and cruel pass-times of Faroe Island fishermen and, for that matter, Spanish peasants, can be explained. These national cultures do not have a long tradition of treating animals in a particularly humane manner. For educated, supposedly sophisticated 20th Century Englishmen to become involved in acts of ritualised cruelty in the name of entertainment is not so easy to swallow.

In Britain, we are for some reason expected to accept the notion that the Royal Family and other well-heeled weekend Barbour wearers can trample across other people's property with packs of trained killer dogs and spend hours wearing out, then ritually slaughtering, wild animals. At the same time, we are expected to be outraged by tabloid stories of working class thugs on council estates who chase and kill stray cats.

Cruel and stupid activity is socially condoned, providing you speak with the correct accent.

Roger Scruton, a self-styled right wing 'intellectual' who has become a spokesman for the hunt lobby is typical of the middle-class suburbanite who, for all his supposed intelligence, cannot adequately justify his ritual killing of animals for pleasure.

His defence rests primarily on his argument that the fox is vermin — but ignores the fact that, in many areas, foxes are bred for the specific purpose of hunting. I wonder if the city-based Mr Scruton, who appears exceptionally keen to control vermin, hunts rats and mice when he is in London? Scruton goes on to say that all other methods of controlling vermin are less humane than chasing it with packs of trained dogs for hours, terrifying it, tiring it out, digging it out of its hide, then flinging it into the pack so that they can rip it apart while it is still alive.



He also fails miserably to explain why, if we are merely talking about the control of vermin, should this be celebrated and turned into a blood ritual from which some individuals deride a dubious kick. (It is popular nowadays to sweep the connection between killing and sexuality under the carpet, but the fascination of killing, torture, and violence is sexual.)

Scruton pleads for the hunt on the grounds that it provides people with the enjoyable experience of riding horses and that this is heightened by "the thrill of the chase". (Joy-riders, shoplifters and all sorts of sociopaths use the same pathetic argument of "thrill seeking" for THEIR behavioural problems). Scruton obviously hasn't heard of chasing a previously laid scent.

Scruton really perceives the fox hunting debate to be a question of leftist lesbians attacking decent, middleclass traditionalists, and to defend the elitist argument says that hunts are drawn from people from all walks of life. Again, he is quite wrong. The majority of people who hunt are from higher income groups and the majority of working class people involved are not part of the hunt, but are employed by the hunt. He also wrongly reckons that the anti-hunt lobby are guilty of "siding with the innocent fox" and applying human traits to an animal. He misses the point. The issue is not the humanisation of a wild animal, but the dehumanising effects that the legalised ritual killing of animals for entertainment has on civilised human society.

British society would not — as I said, does not — condone groups of working class skinheads with packs of pit bull terriers chasing animals, often trespassing, shouting, screaming, blowing trumpets, tearing animals to pieces and celebrating by daubing blood over children and drinking alcohol in public places. Why, then, should it condone fox hunting? What Scruton is so badly defending is not the right to control vermin, or even the moral correctness of killing animals, but the right of a privileged few to act in a manner that the vast majority of citizens find to be cruel, barbaric, and highly offensive. Hardly something that adheres to contemporary concepts of public decency, order and democracy.

Scruton thinks he is defending traditional values, and the rights individuals have to make choices. He is in fact defending something that is, if he considers the matter more deeply, actually quite alien to the English way of life, and championing champagne anarchy over democracy.

However tempting violent action may be when one witnesses such repulsive behaviour, violence is not the answer and should not, in

a world teetering on a genocidal scenario, even be considered as a solution to a problem. To resort to violence is to shake bloody hands with Control. However high minded his ideals, Brutus was aptly named.

One way to deal with the Faroe Island cull and numerous other atrocities is to act as one would when faced with an exhibition of the symptoms of mental illness. With drugs. A prescription of MDMA for every islander and huntsman would soon cure them of their obvious social disease. Scruton may even stop being an intellectual and become a man of intellect.

## THE COLOUR FIELD

Nothing is more arrogant or more indicative of the world's current problems than the phenomena of killing animals purely for pleasure. If men with jellified genitalia need so desperately to prove themselves as men, then they should go and climb a tree or do a hundred press-ups. Something macho like that.

Unlike our less sophisticated Faroe Island cousins and British intellectuals, most Californian's have come to terms with the fact that animals should be studied by intelligent people, not gratuitously shot by stupid ones. Animals have much to teach us in terms of our position in the universe, about the way the planet works, and about communication.

What can we learn from studying animals about communication? We wondered earlier what messages whales passed-on to each other about humans. "Morphic Resonance" was the term coined by the scientist Dr. Rupert Sheldrake to describe the as yet unfathomable forms of mammalian communication which stretch across continents and generations.

Simply, it is one term used to describe what is going on when creatures communicate in ways that humans do not understand. For example, it is well known that if a dolphin is taught a trick in an aquarium in Florida, then the time taken to teach a similar dolphin the same trick in an aquarium in, say, England would be shorter.

This sort of phenomenon has been observed and documented by doubting scientists since 1920, when the psychologist William McDougall of Harvard University set up a series of experiments to discover if animals were able to inherit behavioural characteristics from their parents. Not behaviour that had been genetically programmed for generations, but habits that had been acquired by their parents during the parents own life, or learnt by unrelated animals of the same species.

McDougall placed laboratory rats, one at a time, in a tank of water and gave them two routes of escape; one up a brightly lit gangway at the end of which the rat received a small electric shock, the other up an unlit gangway which led to freedom. McDougall recorded how many times each poor rat took to learn that to avoid the electric shock he must always chose the unlit gangway.

With the first generation of rats it took an average of 160 shocks before they learnt the correct route out of the water tank. Their offspring learned the trick quicker, and their offspring quicker still, until the average of shocks each rat would receive went down from the original 160 to only 20 before they learnt how to escape without a shock.

Orthodox mendelian genetic science denies that such a thing could happen, and although biologists could find nothing wrong with McDougall's elaborate test procedures, they concluded that he must have, by chance, picked a co-incidentally super intelligent group of rats in the first place. McDougall started again, conducting tests to find the most stupid rats he could, and only breeding from them from one test generation to the next. According to conventional scientific theory, the rats success rate should have gone down, but they did even better than the first 'intelligent' generations of rats, learning an incredible ten times faster.

However interesting this may be, people will still say that genetics' are responsible, even though we have no understanding of how such specific behavioural information could be passed biologically from one generation to the next.

McDougall's experiments really get weird when, in Australia, a group of scientists try repeating his work. Using the same species of rats and a replica water tank some time later, the team were amazed to discover that from the very FIRST generation of rats the animals were learning the trick much quicker than McDougall's earlier rats. After repeating the astounding experiments and finding that this was no fluke, the Australian scientists then tried the experiments with untrained, unrelated rats. Over an exhaustive series of experiments lasting twenty five years, the scientists found that even rats who were not bred from parents who had taken the tests were quicker and quicker in solving the problem, until it got to such a stage that many rats made no errors at all, always picking the unlit gangplank to safety from their very first test.

To this day, the results of this and much other similar work cannot be explained by conventional science, but it does lend credence to the idea that there is some shared pool of unconscious information that is

'tuned into' by mammals and acted upon at an unconscious level. Without denying the physical importance of such things as DNA, protein molecules and so on, and the influences of the environment, Sheldrake's theory that there exists a morphogenetic field (the word comes from the Greek *morphe*, meaning 'form' and *genesis*, which means coming into being) which, like the invisible fields of magnetism or electricity for instance, can be tapped into. Dr. Sheldrake does not to my knowledge seem to have aired any theories on how such a 'field' would be accessed, but for the sake of argument we can invent one of our own.

If this pool of what may perhaps be energy exists as an evolutionary store of information, connecting all living things, then, like a computer, it needs to be accessed at different levels, by different species, for different information.

Perhaps the signal or reference tone given off by each different species's brain wave activity has the effect of tuning the unconscious mind in to the information pool, much like a radio tuned to a certain frequency would pick up only the station that the listener wanted, rather than all the irrelevant jumble of foreign language stations vying for attention across the dial. In this way, a dog would tune in to the canine pool of stored information, the dolphin would pick up the accumulated knowledge of his forefathers, and a human would do the same.

The idea strikes many familiar chords. Could not the 'auras' of Madame Blavatsky be a visual interpretation of such an energy field? Would the existence of such a field not help us explain the phenomena of people communicating across time and space by telepathic means? Could this pool be the akashic record, or the "collective unconscious" of Carl Jung? Could this vast interconnecting web of information energy be God itself? Ulp.

I don't know, but I'm sure that if it was, then it would not have any interest in stopping me have a drink on a Sunday afternoon.

I do, though, think that such a pool of information would be rippled by the activities of people who persist in torturing and exterminating various species of creatures purely for their own enjoyment.

What is the akashic record saying about us to all those whales out there? The answer, as Spock would have known, is quite logical — and all too obvious.

## THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE.

On the top of the mountain just inland from the town of San Simeon is a large Disneyland castle. Hurst's Castle. William Randolph Hurst was one of those men whose certainty infects the rest of us with doubt. In California, there are many such men.

"Stood still on the highway, I saw a woman by the side of the road...

A fearful pressure paralysed me in my shadow ...

I said 'Mama I've come to the valley of the rich, myself to sell'.

He said, "Son, this is the road to hell .."

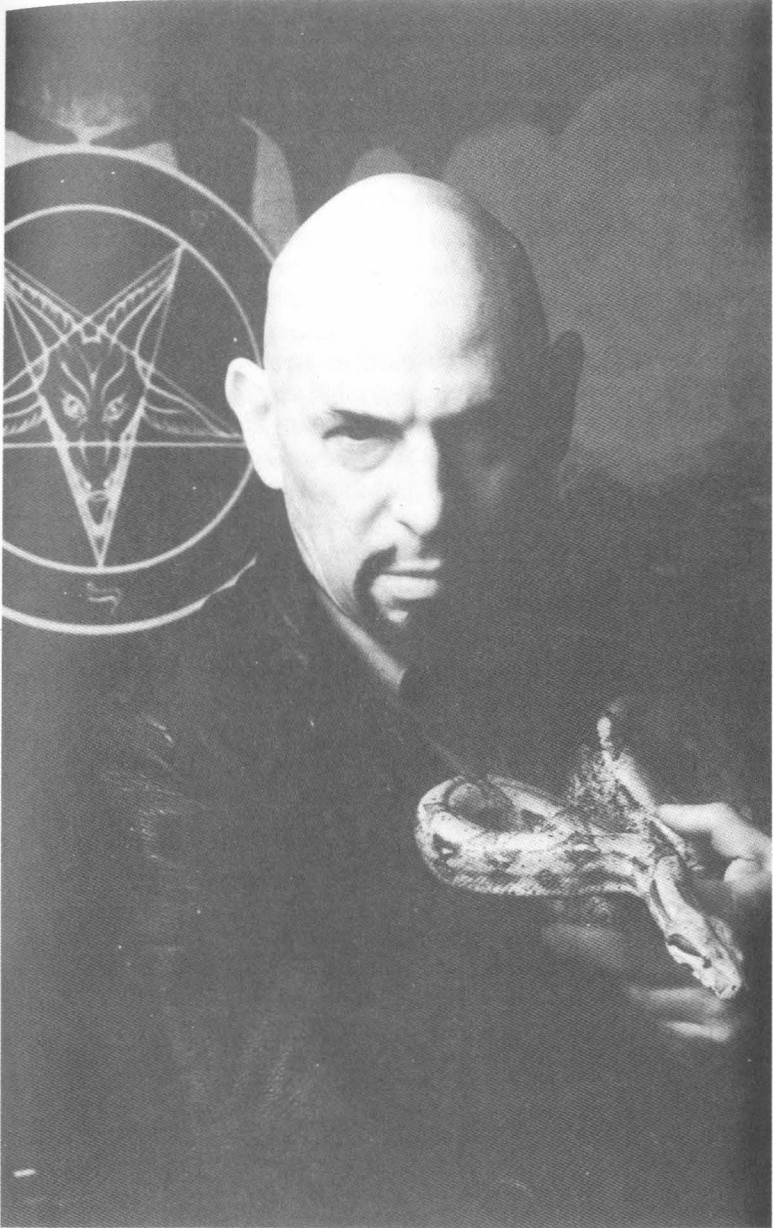
Chris Rea — *Road To Hell*

You drive along the freeways of California and realise that those horror stories you heard back home are just not true. Even in the big cities, the Americans are generally the slowest, safest, and most polite drivers in the world.

San Francisco creeps up over the horizon and suddenly hits you as you slide around Half Moon Bay. SF is a shanty town seaport set on multi coloured hills, speckled with low-rise wooden houses. Yellow, blue, pink. Your mind flicks like the channels on the unfathomable FM radio in the car...The Lovin' Spoonful...Harvey Milk...Flowers in your hair...hanging out of the gun barrels of National Guardsmen...Emmet Grogan's Diggers leaving wads of money in wastepaper bins...Patti Hurst staying away from Daddy's castle to give out free food with the S.L.A....A chic, hip, shanty town. The sailors shanties were learnt aboard sail ships moored off the Polynesian islands. On hot evenings the ritual chants of the island tribes would float aboard on the wind, like a dim signal on a untuned radio, crossing the ether, the cultures, beneath the last wisps of pollution-free cloud. he dimly heard, distant rythms and shouted harmonies of the islanders' religious songs would be taken-up by the bored crew, re-worked, given English lyrics, westernised, and end up being sung on streets from Plymouth to San Francisco. Cultures are misunderstood, looted, re-invented. Time loops.

## LUCIFER RISING

Now, in the apartments of Haight Ashbury, the spirits and bones of the "savages" rituals have returned, not as sailor's songs, but stripped down, closer to their original ethnic roots, and are repeated phonetically



*Anton LaVey (Photo Bobby Neel Adams)*

as the chants in the rituals and mind-exercises of San Francisco's New Agers, Hippies, and assorted cult members. Whereas 16th Century sailors wanted to convert ethnic culture into something which they could understand and absorb, the 20th Century urbanite tries to re-invent and copy the past cultures that he is unable to understand, in the hope that a return to a more simple, yet 'spiritual' past will fill some perceived void. They may have a point.

The past seeps into the city, informing the present in reheated atavistic dew — the Prima Materia for access to the hidden worlds of the akashic record. As in worthwhile Art, this information is carried not on cheap tricks or intellect, but on an often vague, indefinable feeling that is more astutely reflected in music or brushstrokes: convenient to charlatans who wish to package and sell it, and exasperating for those who must express themselves in more exacting, linear forms. As Brion Gysin once said, Writing is fifty years behind Painting. Perhaps.

## IT'S SUCH A LOVELY PLACE...

"Then some sage man, above the vulgar wise,  
knowing that laws could not in quiet dwell,  
unless they were observed, did first devise the  
names of Gods, religion, heaven, and hell ...  
Only bug-bears to keep the world in fear."

*The Hellish Verses* produced  
at the trial of Sir Walter Raleigh  
and ascribed to him. 1610.

One San Franciscan who has attempted to apply a capable and contemporary mind to the subject of searching out and examining such "vague and indefinable" feelings, and at the same time express himself through a hybrid of words and deeds, is Anton Szandor LaVey. The mystery man who smiled from the house on the inside cover of the Eagle's *Hotel California*, the man who performed the wedding in *Rosemary's Baby*. A man of sub cultural in-jokes and hidden influence. In my mind, LaVey is one of the most fascinating and compelling artists in America today, but you won't find him featured in Art in America or Artscribe, simply because LaVey is one of those artists who is sensible enough not to call himself an artist. And he does not call himself an artist because Anton LaVey may REALLY be interested in changing the world.

He is the High Priest and Founder of an organisation that is a tax-exempt registered charity in California, The Church of Satan.

Although generally regarded with derision in the pompous, academic circles of European occultism, LaVey is a big deal here for precisely the same reasons as he is vilified by many in the U.K. Namely that in the Sixties, he came to a conclusion that is shared by most people who have studied the occult and applied to it even a modicum of common sense: That with few exceptions, "every tract and paper, every 'secret' grimoire on the subject of magic are nothing more than sanctimonious fraud — guilt ridden ramblings...esoteric gibberish...[that has] clouded the entire issue..."

LaVey's choice of words is noteworthy. My old friend Kenneth Rayner Johnson — author of the best contemporary book on Alchemy (*The Fulcanelli Phenomenon*) and a mine of useful information — once told me that the word 'gibberish' itself was introduced into the English language originally as slang, springing from the name of the alchemist Jabir el-Haiyan, who was known in the West as 'Geber'. Even more than his name, much of the language he used in his writings was not easily pronounceable, and the texts themselves were unintelligible to the uninitiated, hence the word "gibberish". LaVey's use of the word as a derisory descriptive noun either means that LaVey is not truly as au fait with the subject of esoteric knowledge as he might be, or it means that he uses the term with a sense of ironic deliberation. Given the man's obvious intelligence and erudition, it is likely to be the latter.

LaVey also stated in the Sixties that which is taken as being obvious to almost everybody in Britain since the last century — that, like God, the Devil does not exist. At least, the Devil is not some anthropomorphic deity that represents the reverse of God and what is Good, but is rather a derisory term (a little like "gibberish") used to describe the dimly understood force of nature that leads mankind to evolve, express himself, revolt, explore, progress, and seek knowledge and experience that has, by those with vested interests, been forbidden. And, as the word "occult" means, made secret. As with the serpent wrapped around the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden, or the man who splits the atom, or the little boy who looks up a girl's skirt to see what's there. All actions are done in innocence, until they are called evil.

Although LaVey conveniently seems to forget that such opinions have been obvious throughout modern history, preferring to air these opinions as though one were being made privy to some marvel-



lous esoterica, it's true that they do need repeating, and he has at least shaved his head, reversed his secular collar, and put himself on the line. Serrano's argument comes back to me. It all depends on one's audience... I would probably agree with more of what LaVey says about Religion and Morality than with what most people say, and normally would find myself arguing firmly on the side of the Church of Satan, but to Mr LaVey I would play Devil's Advocate, particularly as many reader's of *Rapid Eye* will already be familiar with aspects of LaVey's work and not need the basic principles explained and defended. We are not Jesse Helms, so, let's get specific. The Devil can take it.

Like so many attracted to the micro world of the occult, LaVey seems obsessed with Christianity, even though he blurs this obsession by referring to "all other churches", as if all other churches were Christian. (For instance, he says that all other churches are based on worship of the spirit and denial of the flesh and the intellect, even though this could hardly be said of Moslems, for example).

The millennia-minded Mr. LaVey talks a lot of sense, but insists, like Serrano, in addressing his audience using terminology that is supposed to make things both more thought-provoking and accessible, but which in fact serves to reinforce the same old social barriers and beliefs. On the one hand he implies, or at least, I infer, that he is merely interested in forming a group of like-minded, thoughtful individuals who can pool their resources and energies in an attempt to come up with a liberating, alternative humanist philosophy, free from crippling, dogmatic belief systems. And he has done much to further such a utopian lifestyle.

On the other hand, however, he indulges himself with old terminology and hierarchies, clichés, wearing black cloaks, horned hats, silly goatee beards and festooning his Church and stationery with the glamour of gothic gore and cobwebs. His argument for all this is the old one, the same one that was manifest to the tribesmen on the beach and the crewmen of those ships anchored back in the 17th Century as they made-up their sea shanties. That people need images, ritual, symbols, focal points, as vehicles for the exorcism of feelings that they can't, in Western life, easily release. We all know that this is true — the evidence for it is everywhere in our art and adverts, our cultures and sports — but one can't help but wonder if this is enough.

Like many avant-garde art movements (which are themselves generally utopian), Satanism seems to offer a safe channel through which all the anger, all the creativity and desperation one feels with life

can be directed. But the direction is only used towards the taking-up of a social STANCE against prevailing views of the world, and not in the genuine creation of a new world. Just as one cynical view of Punk could say that it was a control device that recuperated feelings of alienation and castrated much potent revolutionary feeling. (Former *Rapid Eye* interviewee Patrik Fitzgerald summed up this view on his *Safety Pin Stuck in my Heart* EP in simple consumerist terms back in '78, saying that Punk meant only that Bondage Trousers were available at Woolworths.)

Also I wonder if by replacing one old, limiting religion with a new, limited one, by appropriating and inverting old symbols, how understanding, or even knowledge, is increased. If Satan is 'Progress', how then has he been served? Occultists, like Artists, should learn that the simple act of reversal, like the act of protest, is really not enough nowadays.

Perhaps though, I'm expecting too much. As it seems that as soon as you open your mouth to speak, much of what you say is stripped of some feeling due to the way words are formulated and received. Printed feelings also then become propaganda. To escape this eternal problem, LaVey could have been an abstract artist rather than a man of words, but that, as LaVey knows, appeals only to people who are afraid or unwilling to meet the challenge of language, which is the challenge placed on the individual by Society. A society formed and ruled by words, ruled not, as art bores think, only by simple images, but by what images MEAN. You can only do so much, and LaVey deserves respect for doing what he has. There are, though, still several obvious questions to be asked of the Church of Satan.

In a manner which is identified very much with the 'American way', the focus here seems not on Understanding or even on Information, but on assuming a position of power. Although much of the interest in 'alternative' structures can be seen as individuals reacting to America's materialism, in practice, beneath the veneer, the alternative offered does not seem an alternative life, but an alternative way to achieve the largely materialist goals of American society.

The Church of Satan's rituals, like any formal rituals, concentrate the mind through symbols and words and suggested altered states, but the mind that has been nurtured on Hollywood is concentrated not on things of the spirit, but of the material. Most books you see on the shelves in America are *How To* books; *How To Get More Money*, *How To Get Your Boss Eating Out Of Your Hand*, *How To Fuck More*

*Women* (the titles are usually more coded, but we all know what they're about). The type of occultism practised by Satanists represents the last word in this genre of oneupmanship. Only, in the Church of Satan, the church-goer, or client, is encouraged not to chant "I must get thin" or "I don't have a big nose" as in some Californian psychotherapy group, but chant in enochian — the language invented for Dr. John Dee by his clever young skryer Edward Kelly in 16th Century England.

This use of Elizabethan gibberish — which appears serious rather than ironic — in itself seems something of a contradiction, given that the brilliant polymath Dee's books, such as *De Heptarchia Mystica*, were major contributions to the cloudy magickal thought of the 19th century occult revivalists, including those in MacGregor Mathers' Golden Dawn which LaVey so heavily criticises. The language, handed down to Kelly as if he were a new age Christian speaking in tongues, a priest reciting in Latin, or an opera star singing in Italian, is only understood by those who've bought the book. And in LaVey's own words, "If you want miracles, you should expect to have to pay miraculous prices." Philosophies, like spells, don't come cheap. Having said that, I don't think LaVey is a charlatan (he may well believe everything he says), and he is certainly not a crank. More accurately, he is a wealthy activist artist who can attract charlatans and cranks.

Here in California, LaVey's clients have included not only the usual bunch of weak-willed losers, hip lonely hearts and thrill-seekers, but the rich and famous aswell. The most famous being Sammy Davis Jr., Jayne Mansfield, and The Eagles.

The Eagles' manager Larry Salter has gone on record as saying that the group were members of the Church of Satan. The first base for the Church was an old hotel on California Street, San Francisco, hence the title of their biggest-selling album, *Hotel California*. Christian fundamentalist anti-rockers here have come up with the accusation that the 'Hotel California' track actually includes the backmasking message which says "Yes, Satan had help, he even organised his own religion". Hardly an Earth shaking statement, and even if it were, who cares? Backmasking never did anyone any harm as, contrary to popular belief, the unconscious mind does not listen to music backwards, and even if it was somehow willing or able to discern such buried messages, the suggestion that "Satan had help" is hardly going to make someone go out and commit murder.

The practice of backmasking, which involves recording words backwards and hiding them among music, is merely an invention of a Record Industry that wishes to increase it's market share in an American pop chart still based on the creation of a superficial Generation Gap. American pop and rock music is, more than most, merely interested in making kids feel that they are scaring Mom and Dad with all that crazy hair, wiggling, Attitude, and so on. The putting about of rumours concerning backmasking is simply more ammunition in the game. (Anyway, as they say, if you spend your time sitting at home listening to your vinyl records backwards, then you probably ARE the Devil.)

The Eagles, like Sammy Davis Jnr., are said to have got tired with the Church of Satan and drifted away from LaVey. Jayne Mansfield did not.

Mansfield was a sad case. Once a loyal devotee and lover of LaVey, the moviestar didn't heed his warnings and stay away from her new boyfriend, lawyer Sam Brody, and LaVey placed a curse on his rival.

Shortly before her death, LaVey claims that he was making a cutting out of a newspaper and found, on the next page, that he had also accidentally cut through a photograph of Ms Mansfield — cutting off her head. The rest is cult history. Jayne Mansfield was decapitated in a car crash. The car was being driven by Sam Brody. LaVey says he didn't mean to do it, and was devastated with the news of her death. He'd missed.

That some spells and incantations do work on some level, I don't doubt. So, depending on how cynical you are, this either means that Mr LaVey is very good at cursing, or pretty lousy. Perhaps the old rule of karma, expressed in the occult as being the rule of bad magick returning home to roost, is in some sense applicable.

But the hype and hokum are not really important here. The ideas of The Church of Satan are. The basic philosophy is typically practical — anything that brings gratification is OK and the morality put about by the Christian Church, which is based on guilt and self denial, is a load of hogwash. LaVey encourages devotees to question all things, avoid dogma, enjoy sex, live in the present, extend personal liberties... and I say hurray to all that, so far so good.

However, the further you get into the philosophy, the shakier it all becomes. LaVey, who is not only founder but self-styled leader of the Church, starts laying down the Law. Don't they always?

In the Church of Satan's Laws, you are, for example, encouraged not to turn the other cheek to your enemies and told that 'love' is a sign of weakness when shown to strangers, or to anybody who you have not chosen specifically to love. LaVey's tracts are also peppered with practical examples of how a Satanist might behave, which are perhaps chosen to attract people who still feel that they need to offend their maiden aunt in the suburbs. For example, you are quite sensibly told such obvious things as if you are a sadist and you meet a masochist, you should torture them for your mutual satisfaction.

But, despite the superficial shunning of morality throughout, you are then told not to inflict harm on those who don't want to be harmed. Not to kill animals, and so on. But, if one finds gratification in activities which others find unacceptable, quite why you shouldn't inflict harm on others, or sacrifice one of the last surviving Giant Pandas for that matter, is not made clear. And so it goes on, contradictions mounting, from one 'Law' unto the next. What rationale and humanism and logic there is, soon being lost under a welter of pseudo amoral posturing. As usual, you realise that one set of mores and laws is merely being replaced with another. Only in this scenario, everything is not unnaturally informed by Mr LaVey's own personal morality and his member's shared obsession with Christianity, amid much theatrical blasphemy and what can only correctly be described as 'naughtiness'. As in all rulebooks, difficult issues are never raised, or stupidly dismissed.

What, for example, happens to the Here and Now, the Planet, if we don't tolerate our enemies? Nuclear war? How then is 'he' (ie Human Progress) served?

On the one hand, the ideas seem to be aimed at providing natural justice beneath the oppressive yoke of the Christian Churches and their hypocritical cultures, but on the other, such an ideal of justice is conveniently ignored. Babies are thrown out with the bathwater everywhere. The only worthwhile tenants of Christianity — compassion, tolerance, love — are lost in a tirade against the true evils propagated in the name of Christ by the arrogant men and women who have called themselves preachers and teachers throughout history. The people who burned the Salem Witches, killed the Kennedy's, and let Brian Jones float in his new pool were — 'after all' — the same. In this light, LaVey's world doesn't look all that different. It's still the weak-minded, rather than the meek, who inherit the Earth.

LaVey is a pleasant, intelligent man who has decided to act the (Scape)Goat. Despite what many people think, he has done more than

most to further the practical, liberal principles to which most people in the West guiltily adhere — by trying to remove some of the guilt. Nothing wrong in that. But, like most American artists and liberals (and he is in many ways both, though I doubt if he'd like either term), he's using a language, or a form of magick, that has lost it's once powerful potency. Does anyone but a Christian really care if you hang a crucifix upside-down? And if it is important to them because of the repetition of Christ's image and misquoted words throughout our culture, isn't referring to Christ's image at all likely only to strengthen the Christian grip on Perception?

People would say to this argument that you cannot ignore such powerful images in the hope that they will go away. But you can. If you do not make your controlled choice, you realise that such choices are unnecessary. Using the emotive image of Satan to represent Evolution may be an interesting idea in that it illustrates the point that much of Christian teaching is against the idea of Knowledge and Evolution, but it also implies that the search for Knowledge is heretical and therefore in some way wrong. It is of course perfectly natural to strive for progress, and Old Testament deities or Jewish prophet figures have about as much to do with it as the Celtic Banshee or the Babylonian god Ea.

The Church of Satan is essentially an American phenomenon. Californians like to think that this is because America is a liberal, just, constitutionally right-on place that is the only place in the world that would allow such hereticism. In fact, the truth is that if someone announced the formation of a Church of Satan in England, (I use England as an example as it is the only country which I know enough about) the social effect would be very minimal, because most people in the U.K. are not overt practising Christians.

Unlike America, individuals one meets in Britain in general, and England in particular, also have a deeply ingrained — albeit superficial — tolerance of eccentricity that makes such emotive public displays of anti-social posturing rather less necessary. One need only to look to the political arena to see the point. In Britain, Neil Kinnock can stand up at the Labour Party conference and proclaim himself to be an atheist, Tony Benn can say he is sympathetic to the words of Marx, and Michael Foot can admit to supporting Plymouth Argyle. To me, all three men have made reasonable choices (Mike Bickle was God), but here in America, even in California, such public admissions by a politician would be unthinkable. California needs The Church of Satan; New York needs *Piss Christ*; Britain needs a written constitution.

(Before we get too smug, however, one should consider that Britain, an old country, is far more adept at dealing with what the State considers a threat than America is. For instance, the Social Services and media in Britain have connived in such a way as to make the word "Satanism" automatically equate with sexual child-abuse. So, anyone who investigates the esoteric writings of people such as Aleister Crowley, for example, is considered somewhat 'weird' and perverted. A whole sub-culture, that is involved with all aspects of esoteric and avant-garde art, alternative philosophies etc., is therefore seen as being suspect. Child-abuse, which takes place more often behind net curtains in supposedly pleasant English suburbs where it is ignored, is transposed from 'normal' society, from where it springs, and on to anybody who wishes to live what some see as an 'alternative' lifestyle.)

Like many self styled leaders, Mr LaVey (or 'The Doctor' to his friends) is very sensitive to criticism. When I hint at such topics of conversation to him and his Personal Secretary and biographer, Blanche Barton, he stops praising *Rapid Eye*. When I want to get down to specifics, I'm told that I'm being "nit-picking", and neither LaVey or Barton telephone my hotel room as previously suggested. But people have nit-picked at the Christian Bible for generations — such is the stuff of new religions like Mr LaVey's.

The Church of Satan is a nice idea, a socially useful art piece, but, like other churches, it seems to have missed the point. The point being simply that what you get when you dismiss or decode religious myths, reject both rhetorical Christian mumbo jumbo and Satanic shock, is a marriage of Satan and God. Progress AND Love, Knowledge AND Tolerance.

Such a marriage is called Human.

(Exterior shot of suspension bridges rocking in an Earth tremor. Close-up Interior. He lifts up the sheet to find the bloody, severed head of a dolphin. Last one. Delphinus nesarnack, beelzebub, diabolos, nomen oblitum, obliterated.)

## **BOO HOO BABIES**

There are many offshoot religions in the States. The creation of bogus or deliberately pseudo religious groups — as irony — is something of a tradition here. Unfortunately, the constitutional right all Americans have to take the piss out of religion has been abused by assorted idiots who have taken it all seriously. Thus, the country is full of Protestant

crank-cults who exert a political influence that one would like to think would be laughed at in England. Nowadays, though, under the unholy alliance of such dubious groups as the Jesus Army, the Conservative Family Campaign, and the repugnant Festival of Light, I'm not so sure if we can afford to ignore what has happened here, where the immoral minority can exert their undemocratic dollar dominance to put TV shows off the air and make sure some records never get played, or even made.

Of the openly irreverent, satirical churches, there are some gems. Probably the most famous was the Neo-American Church, formed by Art Kleps in the Sixties. The Church's sacrament was the mind altering LSD., a more obvious ritual tool than the unleavened bread of catholicism, transubstantiation or not. In Klep's book, *The Boo Hoo Bible*, the drugged beatnik demanded that church members envisaged a brave new world of unbridled bliss, one created here on Earth, rather than in some vague, hoped-for heaven. The N.A.C. even went to court to establish its constitutional right — as a bona fide religion — to incorporate the use of LSD in its rituals. Judge Gessell, who more recently presided over the Oliver North trial, predictably threw Kelps out of court. Miserable bastard.

Given the scandal over Rushdie's boring *Satanic Verses*, we should also at this point remember America's Moorish Orthodox Church, which was nothing more than a 1960's parody of Islam. And then there's the Discordian movement, presided over by White Cord witch, Robert Anton Wilson. The man who, like Lazarus' wife, mourned twice. Basically, the Discordians taught that God was a woman. And a mad woman at that. The Discordians were utopianist artists who knew that in a world based on words, they had to write. The discordian myth, a joke which, like all good jokes, has a true black sadness at its core, has been fuelled by several books. One was *Principia Discordia*, the other was *Illuminatus* — the trilogy which is still on the bookshelves of shops around San Francisco's Union Square.

One of the most hip churches here is one which is well known in London, that of the Church of the SubGenius. It's best slogan is it's most crass — "Pull the wool over your own eyes". The Church was founded in 1978 down in Dallas by Ivan Stang, (Douglas St.Clair Smith). Doug, in typically obvious arty fashion, took a picture that was supposed to represent American 'success' from an old magazine, added the name J.R. Bob Dobbs to it, and went about posting this with mailart pieces to everyone, telling them that the world was due to end on July 5th 1998, but, if they sent an ordainment fee, they would become



members of the Church of the SubGenius and be saved by aliens in the nick of time. Quite an amusing little idea for ten seconds.

J.R. Bob Dobb's picture soon started turning up throughout the American underground and spread to English fanzines (most notably ones emanating from Manchester and Sheffield, not surprisingly) and, as these things tend to do, informed an unspecific attitude of outsider oneupmanship.

I have always been in two minds about such Mailart, It is a central problem of much 'alternative' art. That is, in individual, creative terms, it may all be very healthy and fun, in that some people are encouraged to communicate and Produce rather than solely Consume. It may also give isolated minds the feeling that they are not alone, and give artists who are too extreme to be popular in Cork Street or the galleries on Melrose Avenue a slightly 'subversive' avenue of expression, but — ultimately — that's usually all it does. It's not exactly going to change anyone's world.

"He wants to be above the law/  
but he doesn't know what he's fighting for/  
with his hammer and his popsicle/  
they'll put him in a hospital for good"  
*Asylums in Jerusalem* — Scritti Politti

At this point, I am standing in Haight Ashbury's version of Rough Trade. Scritti Politti are playing and I'm in a time warp. Once, the Scrit's leader Green Gartside — then the epitome of Camden Marxist Art Squatter — complained to me about the very thing he had become famous for. The production of DIY records, the cottage mailorder industry of the John Peel Post Punk generation, the mailing out of zeroxed propaganda, tapes, records. All this, he said, was boring. It was, too, an idealised, dull, anti-social life stance spent amid the musty world of Blues, Bacon, and Burroughs. Green got depressed, asked me if I had any drugs (I hadn't), and in the morning was staring up from a hospital bed, having been told by disapproving doctors that he had almost died. When recuperating, a shaken Green ditched Marxism and became faithless, and *Faithless* became the new Scrit's first chart single and John Peel's record of the year. Kind of how I feel, standing here now in Rough Trade.

The very pleasant nouveau hippies I meet here have a copy of *Rapid Eye One* on display on their shop's wall. A man with a lot of hair

grabs me and pumps my hand, saying that it's the best thing he's seen in ages.

I nearly faint.

Around the book displayed on the wall they've kindly written an advert for the book which says it's "super cool", and that, it seems, is enough.

Getting the post in the morning and finding 'interesting' images on postcards from mailartist's around the world is initially very pleasant, but after a while the novelty of networking — the vague sense of camaraderie, the effect of pleasant aesthetics, the discovery of a piece of mail that isn't a Final Demand — wears off, and now most of it goes straight in the bin. It doesn't do anything more than communicate the obvious fact that, well, there are millions of discontented arty bastards like you in the world. Looking at the posters and flyers in Rough Trade and the coffeeshop, they're all Just So. Just as you knew they would be. Full of 'dadaesque' cut-ups and collages, repeated photocopied images and some even with the rubber stamps that mailartists, in a mockery of officialdom, once made their own. But it all appears to me so much empty stylism, informed by an Alternative Art movement of which Mailart was an integral part. The graphics department of the revolution. But really, what is so useful about a bunch of people who are interested in art sending postcards to each other? Having been born a month before the Sixties started, I'm probably too old, or too stupid or too cynical, but I think that unless these images say anything other than signalling some vague 'alternative' type attitude, unless they cast some light into this smoggy darkness, then, to use the local vernacular, I think the idea sucks.

A friend of mine in London (the highly underrated painter Nicholas Slagg) has this tattoo under both his armpits. He likes to show it at restaurants full of tourists. In one armpit is the word "DA". In the other, the word "DA". It's a nice tattoo. A nice joke late at night. To some, Dada may well have been God, may well have helped millions of people through Everyday Life in some small but precious way, but standing here, now, Dada is a dead horse, or a dead dog. Irrationality, like protest, like inversion, is not enough anymore.

The Dead Dog, or any rotting carcass for that matter, has been useful in activist art since 1928, and is, in a society based on animals (living but, most importantly, dead) as traditional an art medium as a piece of canvas. This seems particularly the case in America, where the beefburger cow is almost as sacred an icon as Christ (hence, some think,

the phenomenon of mysterious cattle mutilations in the Mid West, as reported in our last issue). Here in California, we have Mark Pauline creating automatons from dead animals, Serrano (of course) working with animal carcasses, and all manner of stylised animal outrages as loved by naughty Dadaists since the feather and fur loving surrealist, Max Ernst.

Now, though, it must be clear that the vast majority of activist art is incapable of overturning anything other than previously held artistic traditions and, in the case of the dead animals, only able to continue flogging the same old horse, or dog.

The widely publicised Bay Area Dadaists, led by people such as *Vile* editor Anna Banana, were apparently highly unamused when they found what Dada could mean. Local art-prankster Monty Cazazza, so I'm told, once took it upon himself to show them. At one typical social gathering of the group, jolly old Monty donned his fatigues and pulled a loaded revolver. As the assembled radicals assumed the position, he produced a dead cat from his briefcase, threw it on the carpet and set light to it, then locked the door and left. Another dead animal. How's that for Dada? I don't know fish.

Back East, in Baltimore, Church of the SubGenius member Michael Tolson made news with his *Pee Dog/Poop Dog...* piece, which involved Michael, bollock naked but for his greasepaint, beating the bodies of two dead dogs which he'd hung from the ceiling of a railway tunnel (nice industrial acoustic touch). Not surprisingly, Tolson was arrested on charges which no doubt concerned him making a complete idiot out of himself, and got off with probation. Yep, art is just so weird here man.

Much of the alternative conceptual art of Eighties America was influenced by Fluxxus, who effectively dissolved in the 1970s. Although there were several English members, the group was primarily American and German, centred — not surprisingly — on Dusseldorf. Joseph Beuys was of course Fluxxus' most famous member, but the group included Yoko Ono, Dick Higgins, Emile Williams, Robert Filiou, Daniel Spoerri, and the crap Korean/American video artist Nam June Paik. The groups manifesto — written by George Maciunas — stated that Fluxxus were a non-art group whose art was concerned with amusement, thus foregoing the pretensions of significance, individuality, skill and exclusivity that dominates all high art to this day. That sounded great to me. Marcel Duchamp and John Cage stand in the background.

Beuys, in fact, was pure Vaudeville comedian-Wit thrust into the role of concentration camp commandant. He was lucky enough not to have to kowtow to dealers and gallery owners as he had a small group of patrons who guaranteed to buy anything that he produced. He was thus free to concentrate on the real business of art — making a name for oneself. Like Warhol, Beuys became a perfect artist because he was able to create the perfect art piece for an image-ridden society — a persona. His Homburg hat, ammo-jacket, jeans, hunting boots, cane, were (like Warhol's sunglasses and wig) essentially props. Part of the action-piece that was the artist himself. His obsession with skin, leather, fur, grease, was said to arise from his PERSONAL experiences as a wartime flyer (he was burned), so, as usually happens, what is presented to the public as an inversion of normality, a piece of whimsy or dadaist irrationality, is in fact a glimpse of the past. A symbol of SOMETHING significant that has, one is assured, gone on earlier. A secret code. Ah. As with most deep cultural stuff, all one has to do is break the code (read the book, attain the Diploma) to be given the gift of appreciation, understanding, knowledge.

But nobody seems to ask — knowledge of what, exactly?

As vaudeville comic, Beuys knew that what he was really doing was much the same as what Tommy Cooper or Terry Gilliam was doing. Realising that surrealism was entertaining and using it as entertainment. (Although it's true to say he did much work that cannot be construed as being entertaining, such as the recently exhibited *Log Jam*). Given the emotional and conceptual significance we attach to words and images, then calculated irrationality, juxtaposition and playful, mischievous manipulation IS aesthetically amusing. To sit and watch Beuys explaining the meaning of art to a dead hare was not an occasion for long faces.

Another Beuys piece that is much admired in America was the one in which he stood and squeezed a piece of fat, then a piece of 'plasma' out of his fist. This went down particularly well here because, apart from playing with dead animals, another favourite pastime of American artists is the ejaculation and use of wet, sticky 'tactile' substances, with names such as 'plasma'. Bodily fluids are good business. Mapplethorpe got much publicity for his series of cum-shots, and Serrano his piss, even though the tradition was already old by the time Yoko Ono painted with her blood in 1960.

One acquaintance of mine, the New York Neoist Istvan Kantor (the 'original' Monty Cantsin), has tried selling phials of his blood as

Art since 1979, and there can be few postmen in America who've not unwittingly delivered an envelope containing the influential, seminal, Jerry Dreva's dried spunk to one of his mailart pals. (*Wanks for the Memory* was one of Dreva's ideas that David Bowie didn't plagiarise). Then, of course, there's our friend Tolson again, who it seems will stoop to any level in the name of American Art's prime motivation, Publicity. Not surprisingly, Tolson has made a film of himself doing something that you can see in any pornographic film shop in San Francisco — being urinated on.

Of course, the difference between watching someone being pissed on because they like it, or are being paid for it, and watching someone being pissed on in the name of art is purely contextual. Occasionally, when art is removed from that straightjacket, and the ideas art can provoke are used by someone who's socially aware and capable of understanding the audience enough to influence it into self introspection, something can happen.

Knowing Your Audience is a difficult game to play. With some people, it can work. With others it can not. As a contributor to the fanzine *Ripped & Torn*, I was not unnaturally an Ants fan in the late Seventies, when Adam used to play in Max Factor, spectacles and plastic macs and sing songs of European Sons in Furs in the public toilets that passed for punk venues. Then Adam left his squat and met, through Jordan and his part in Jarman's *Jubilee*, Malcom McLaren. A business-like lateral thinker, Malcom then sacked Adam from the Ants and thought up Bow Wow Wow — an extremely underrated project in paedophile pop subversion. Adam then met Marco, of Rema Rema, and started writing facile songs about pirates and became very rich and famous. I once asked him why he'd done this, and he told me that Malcom had told him that he should "know his audience". Adam said that his audience wanted to be glamorous (they did), so he went about making them into heroes. Adam was a pop fan who chose the path of least resistance. He gave his fans evocative images (rebellious pirates, put-upon Native American Indians) and forgot about self introspection, which he said belonged to hippies. No bodily fluids here.

Adam, a genuinely great entertainer in the mould of a Neil Diamond or Tony Bennett, thought he knew that his audience was stupid. Other punks and underground bands knew that their audiences were not.

In the tradition of The Beatles and the Pistols, the English group Throbbing Gristle played their last ever performance here, in San

Francisco. Their unappointed leader, Genesis P-Orridge is well known here. At several spots in the city you can see walls sprayed with his Psychick Cross logo, provoking questions as to it's meaning here, on the street, rather than there, in the gallery. It doesn't take much. All you need for international intrigue is a small but dedicated handful of fans with spray cans. The graffiti campaigns of the Situationist's in Paris, which influenced Pope John Paul and which have only recently been removed — "Be realistic, demand the impossible", like the powerful London Underground stencils of Crass, were only perpetrated by a few guys — in Crass' case, four or five of the group's members travelling without tickets on the Circle Line. (Fred & Judy Vermorel cottoned onto the idea and paid kids to paint London with Sid Vicious' epitaph "99% is Shit", to publicise their hopeless *Millions like Us* projects, but got no interest as anyone who cared knew it was all a con in the first place).

P-Orridge, a smart artist, employed many of the tactics prevalent in underground art and, like McLaren and Jamie Reid did with the Pistols, put them on the street, where they really belonged. In COUM Transmissions, he put on an ironic, undeserved 'retrospective' at the ICA which gained him international renown (it included used Tampax set on plinths in glass cases) and kissed goodbye to a consumerist art world that — as editor of the well renowned reference book *Contemporary Artists* — he knew stank to high heaven. With Monte Cazzaza, he created the genre of Industrial Music before anyone had heard of the demolished Pruitt Igoe apartment block. And with graphic artist Peter Christopherson, electronics' genius Chris Carter, and stripper Cosey Fanni Tutti, emerged from the artists' ghettos of Martello Street and Beck Road with invented instruments and altered perceptions to make TG one of the most influential punk related bands in England, right up there with the Pistols, the Clash, Crass, and — I hate to admit it but let's be honest — The Jam.

In his time, P-Orridge has drawn from Dada and Surrealism, Shock Art, Performance Art, Pop Art, Fluxus, Neoism, Futurism, Punk, Bikers cults, Hippysdom, Satanism, the Beats, Mailart, Scratch video, Acid House, Euro electo pop, the Occult, British Rock, Fascist imagery, Yuppies, Science Fiction, East Coast Drug rock, Pornography, Situationism and Anarchists. Plundering and sucking-up art cultures and ejaculating them out on to the street like bloodied lumps of spittle. A Renaissance Man of Utopian anti art.

It's no surprise to find, littered throughout the work of COUM, TG, and his current group, Psychic TV, (the pop propaganda front of the

'Church' he co-founded but has since parted company with, Thee Temple ov Psychick Youth) a recurring use of dusty mirrors and magick. Like Warhol or Beuys, P-Orridge's art is also primarily involved in the creating of a persona, but with P-Orridge, the persona is one of an experimental, empirical Nietzschean New Man, an attainable lifestyle model that encourages a cynical awareness and practical USE of all the arts — both commercial and esoteric — towards an end which is progressive and, as with LaVey, socially evolutionary. The environment created is total, 24 hours a day, forever. This is not art on a postcard, or in a gallery. This is not art as embarrassing, boring performance carried out in a gallery or written about in dusty, pedantic books.

Where so many others go through the motions (the process), P-Orridge has a knack of stealing, observing, learning, understanding, distorting and, (using whatever materials, technology, media or context necessary) raising specific questions about Life. When in 1982 he asked myself and many other people to post him their blood, hair, or semen, like a mailartist, it was not surprisingly for a purpose that was more than simply Art-related. And, given that, was something that the art world and Press generally ignored. Like we noticed at the LA Opera, like the sailors noticed in Polynesia, like the man who told me to be thrilled before Jesus among Hollywood's graven wax images, P-Orridge noticed that which is so common it has often been overlooked — at best acknowledged, rarely acted upon. In all our conversations, he's only hinted at it, but anyone who sees his work knows, or experiences, what is happening.

Simply, the pronounced observation is that Art and Magick can and do correspond precisely, in aims and effects, and that by the deliberate social marriage of the two supposedly disparate traditions the utopia envisaged by the avant-garde visionaries in the Arts, Radical Politics, and the Occult, may be attainable in the minds of men. Now, the theories expressed with words are catching-up with and literalising the feelings poked-at in rituals, actions, and paintings.

Many 'hard core' activist artists dismiss 'the occult' in the same way that they dismiss surrealism. Politicised activists adore Futurism, Dada, The Situationist International, Punk and Class War for the same reasons as they shun W.B. Yeats or Salvador Dali — because they can only see things in terms of their obvious political content. Anything that suggests romanticism or alternatives to direct political conflict must therefore be a worthless scam, invented to detract from the 'real issues'.

To my surprise, many people who had read the first issue of *Rapid Eye* made comments such as "I like the stuff on art and music and cultures but I don't like all that occult stuff." Or, "I can't see why you had Crowley or Alchemical stuff in it", as if the occult arts and the social reasons for their existence are separate from hip, subversive arts movements.

As we have discussed, much of the occult is cranky, pompous and nonsensical. But what some people miss is the fact that 'occultists' and 'Artists' share many of the same deeply seated emotions, motivations, social attitudes and goals.

In the Nineties, Art will become far more obviously important to the social underground, as baby boomers grow old and tire of pure pop entertainment culture. The occult world too, even now burgeoning with hopeless New Age-ers [*sic*], will receive an influx of new minds as not bought to bear upon it since the 1960s. All the signs are there, from a predictable (overdue) backlash against Thatcherism and Reaganomics, to de-materialism, an interest in ecology, and a lack of interest in traditional left-wing politics.

The social implications of this change are just too important to be left to the dim witted poseurs who seem to have infested the world of the visual Arts and the traditional sphere of Occultism for their own self serving, tedious, gibberish-ridden ends. Unless the arts and 'occult' worlds are widened to be capable of accepting a new, more urgent, more articulate social role — a perceptual role defined by everyone, not just by the few artists and 'Doctors', then this current of Desire, felt by millions, will be wasted. On objects, on unintelligible grimoires, on museum plinths: As Gilbert & George's motto says, "Art for All". We are all artists. None of us are artists.

All this need not mean the debasing of art in any sense. It means encouraging artists and writers who have something to say other than "Buy Me", or "Look at Me and be Glamorous", or "I am of an unspecified revolutionary attitude that you can share". It means encouraging people to stop letting their brains atrophy, for fear of being called pseudo intellectual. It means encouraging people to stop worrying when obviously limited critics such as myself call them 'pretentious' or 'arty'. It means opening-up the closed old worlds, to everyone. It means occultists, writers, and artists, stopping thinking of themselves as being any more different or special than anybody else. After all, when you travel the world you realise only one thing worth writing home about. That everyone is the same.



"Who is Christ to you? He's just like you, he doesn't give a damn!  
Dada will save the world! Christ is a sausage!"  
Johannes Baader from the pulpit of Berlin Cathedral,  
November 1918.

## MALGRE LE BLASPHEME

"I am an anti Christ. I am an anarchist. Don't know what I want ..."  
*Anarchy in the U.K.* — Sex Pistols, 1976.

"A fine beginning to a literary career."  
*Combat* magazine, Paris, 1950,  
on the "Assault on Notre-Dame".

Easter Sunday, April 1950. High mass is in progress at Notre Dame. Ten thousand people throng the church. Then, during a pause after the credo, twenty two year old Lettrist Michel Mourre, dressed in the robes of a Dominican monk, mounts the pulpit and begins to read the sermon.

"Today, Easter Day of the Holy Year, here under the emblem of Notre Dame of Paris, I accuse the universal Catholic Church of the lethal diversion of our living strength toward an empty heaven. I accuse the Catholic Church of swindling. I accuse the Catholic Church of infecting the world with its funereal morality. Of being the running sore on the decomposed body of the West. Verily I say unto you: God is dead!"

At this moment, the organist realised what was going on and hastily started playing, in an attempt to drown out the words of the blasphemer. ".... your prayers have been the greasy smoke over the battlefields of our Europe!..." A gasp of outrage spread through the vast congregation, people stood up. "... we proclaim the death of the Christ God, so that Man may live at last!" By this time, the cathedral's Swiss guards had drawn their swords and were approaching Mourre. One of his co-conspirators, Jean Rullier, tried to protect him, and his face was slashed. With his friend's blood dripping from his robes, Mourre smiled and blessed the worshippers as he and his three friends ran for the exit, being hotly pursued by dozens of men. The four young men ran down to the Seine, with what by now was a lynch mob in pursuit. They were then rescued, and arrested by the police.

After eleven days in police custody, Mourre was set free. Three months later he wrote a book — *In Spite of Blasphemy* — that was so

acceptable to the church that the archbishop of Paris recommended that it be put on the bookshelves of every church library in Paris.

"We would force ourselves to keep quiet at the mention of our old dreams", he wrote, "accept the ruins and be happy with them." talking of the 'ruins' of the Western world's structures which, he had been disappointed to discover, "where empty institutions without a soul". Belief thus briefly lost, Mourre says that he "systematically went out of my way to find ugliness, evil and error in everything". He ascribed this to "only a desperate show of bravado, a mask to conceal our disappointment at not having found truth, beauty and good."

As Grail Marcus pointed out, Mourre, a typical French Catholic, reacted to his loss of faith in Christ, then Marx, then existentialism, by ritually 'confessing' to the death of God, in order that he may be set free from the cycle of belief structures which, without the basis of God, meant nothing to him. Once he had killed God he found, like Judas, that God was resurrected. Mourre and Jesus Christ made the front pages of papers across the world for a fortnight, and he reverted to Catholicism. Like Serrano nearly forty years later, Mourre was great P.R. for the church.

**"SOON TO BE PICTURESQUE RUINS"**

Situationist slogan sprayed on a wall  
in Boulevard St. Michel, Paris 1968.

**"BELIEVE IN THE RUINS"**

*Seditionaries'* punk T-shirt slogan, London, 1976.

Easter Sunday, 1966. One hundred and sixty six years to the day after Puccini's painter hero Mario was scolded for his profanity for his painting in the church of San't Andrea, in Tompkins Square Park in New York's East Village, a man is spotted dragging a ten foot long crucifix along Avenue B. The man is media artist Joey Skaggs, who has made the crucifix himself using the skull of an American Indian with real human hair and a barbed wire crown. The body is made of metal, wood, and sports a huge plaster-of-paris cock between its legs.

Skaggs made the provocative, iconoclastic gesture as "my own personal statement of anger against the hypocrisy of the church." You've got to admire his guts. At the time, the Lower East Side was still a residential neighbourhood of Poles and Puerto Ricans. The sculpture was dragged from Skagg's hands by a group of angry youths but saved, ironically or not, by Father Michael Allen, a progressive local priest who ran the nearby St.Marks-in-the-Bowery catholic

church, in which both artist and piece were given refuge.

Not convinced, Skaggs repeated the escapade every Easter Sunday for four years, culminating in him dragging his cross up Fifth Avenue to the door of St. Patrick's Church, where he intended dumping the cross.

History repeats itself. This time, Skaggs is surrounded by a mob chanting "Kill him!" and the police ("like Roman soldiers," he dramatically recalls) kicked him to the ground, stamped on the cross and then made him pick it up, prodding him with nightsticks as he was made to haul the 250 lb. crucifix to the paddy wagon. A friend, who had been photographing the event, pushed his way through the crowd and helped him carry his load to the van. A perverse, sub-cultural advert for the Christian church.

Like Serrano and Murre, Skaggs became famous: so famous that he was featured on Phil Donahue's TV show. His next art prank, sure enough, involved dogs.

A correspondent of mine, Ubu Rusker (real name Declan), decided to go one better. Wearing only a loin cloth, a crown of barbed wire and a liberal splattering of paint, Ubu had himself crucified to a three metre high cross in the back yard of his home in Brunswick Street, Melbourne, Australia, in front of about twenty of his friends. The fun was filmed by fellow art student Simon Crosby for his short film, *St. Theresa de Ville*. The 8cm long, 2mm thick nails were driven through his hands by a friend.

Ubu said he was nailed to the cross because he "wanted to be like Jesus and feel what he felt. Ultimately I would like to be like him in every way. I want to be unemployed, hang around with my mates and go fishing with them now and then."

Ubu says that he thought he'd feel like Jesus when he hung on the cross, but, alas, rather than being rewarded for his efforts with a spiritual experience, he just felt faint.

"It was a rewarding experience though — punishment is its own reward — and I believe everyone should be crucified in their lifetime."

As these instances clearly indicate, Avant-garde art is directly descended from the heretics of distant history, and the creation of a heretical church, as done by LaVey, is in the finest traditions of the activist avant-garde. Serrano's blasphemy was nothing new.

The publicity seeking Murre, Skaggs, and my lesser known correspondent Rusker challenged society's perceptions of Christ and religion, and found that instead of changing society, they learnt some-

thing about themselves. Visual Art and Performance Art need not, in my mind cannot, really inform social changes, but it can be good therapy, and public suffering is always good for business.

Each Good Friday, the Philippine Department of Tourism buys crosses for the men who volunteer to be crucified for ten minutes as part of the annual Easter festivities. The spectacle is regularly watched by a crowds of over 5,000 people.

I soon discover that, if I turn left out of my hotel door and walk seventy yards down the street near San Francisco's main station, I'm in an area that the locals all tell me to avoid, day or night. Having been walking here, day and night, for the last couple of days (and nights), I had noticed a heavy atmosphere, though nothing to write home about, so I ignore their warnings.

Next night, I turn a deserted street corner in almost total darkness. Then I hear a whistle from ahead. Looking up, I barely make out a group of men in the shadows, five, ten, twenty. That's all I need. A gang. They're wearing their colours, swigging from cans of Coors, and one, I notice, is holding a knife. Now I know why the street is empty. From their shadowy perches on a wall across the street, they start calling out at me, one bangs an empty can on the wall, others start-up a low whistle.

I can either turn around, in which case they'll probably come after me, or break into a run, in which case they're sure to run after me, catch me, and cut my testicles off with a rusty razor blade as I protest that they're ruining the local tourist industry. So I have to brazen it out, as a couple break off from the main group and walk across the road towards me. Shit. Everyone here carries guns. I've watched TV. I walk, closer and closer, try to pretend I haven't noticed them, stiff upper lip, casual saunter up the street, a nice night for a stroll. Look like I know where I'm going. Closer. My pace involuntarily speeds up. One of the guys who's crossed the road is now ten feet in front of me, silhouetted, muttering something. Closer. My body tenses up, adrenaline scratching away at the superficial civilisation. If he goes to hit me, I duck and run like Ben Johnson. Shit, why did I turn up this street? Heart thumps on my sweating chest. I look away from his eyes, past him, up the street. Scratch my head as I walk up to him. He's even with me now. One of the others shouts out. I wait for the word, the question "whaddyathinkyeware?"; which I prepare not to hear, but I walk...past. They shout something else I can't make out. An empty beer can is thrown behind me, bouncing off the sidewalk. I don't look 'round. Somebody up there

likes me. I get to the top of the street, turn the corner out of sight. And run.

I need a drink, stumble through some curtains into a bar. A Taiwanese guy buys me a drink as he likes English people. He's a fan of The Who, he says, then tells me, by the way, not to ever walk around down the road. From Soho down to Brighton, I think to myself, wistfully.

An enormous women plonks herself on the barstool next to mine and introduces herself in a slow Texan drawl. She's not very attractive, but her redeeming feature is the size of her breasts, which squash up over her dress like two bald Tibetan monks had taken refuge in her bra. Ommm. She says she's a hooker, has a Porche outside and asks me if I want to spend 500 bucks for what's left of the night. Nothankyouverymuch. The '500 bucks gradually reduces to 20, and she'll take a Traveller's cheque. IdreallylovetobutI'mnotalone. She says it's a quiet night so she'll stay with me anyway, and proceeds to buy me three or four drinks and refuses any in return. I think she wants to get me drunk and rob me. But she doesn't. She's just a typical, remarkably kind American. The most hospitable people in the world. She tells me that George Michael was an ex-boyfriend of hers. Apparently, George has a seven inch penis, and, despite what the tabloids say, is all man between the sheets. I'd often wondered. Faith restored in both George and the American race, I stagger out into the night, finding my way back to the hotel using the famous invisible piece of string that you seem to look down and follow when tired and emotional. On my way, I step aside as two Japanese tourists run laughing down the street, chased by a security guard and a drunken old man, who shouts "You bastards, you're in America now!" A siren wails in the distance.

Before Crack, all crime here was blamed on Television. Even though the average American is said to watch 7.4 hours of TV every day, the Americans still make and put up with the worst television programmes in the world; soaps, sitcoms, made for TV C-movies, and incessant, uninformative news reports, spliced into by regular hard sell adverts. America of course is not alone in turning into one huge field of couch potatoes, but the standard of TV here is so poor that many of the potatoes have gone rotten. As with all TV cultures, including Britain, the person who controls the screen controls the mind. It's important then that people become active in their use of TV and all other forms of electronic entertainment, that people use video cameras and create films and TV shows, produce soundtracks and voice-overs, and, most important of all, learn how to edit. If only so that we can all see how our perception of reality has been edited.

It really is no surprise to see that some of the most politically astute musicians, writers and artists have used video over the Eighties, not as promotion, but as an end in itself. Although largely ignored by the mainstream audience and sneered at as a gimmick by serious Luddite painters, the social implications of wresting images away from purely commercial, monolithic TV companies is vital. Artists should never be scared of new technology.

In the Eighties computer hackers, modernday anarchists in the tradition of Godwin and Proudhon, showed the world how irrelevant and amorphous national boundaries had become, by invading nations, banks and corporations along a fibre optic thread. In the Nineties, the world belongs to the computer literate, and those who do not become literate will be leaving themselves open to levels of manipulation akin to those experienced by people who can neither read nor write. It is no surprise, then, to find here in California a man who not only realises this fact, but is prepared, as usual, to do something about it. His name will be familiar to everyone who has ever Tuned In. Turned On. Or Dropped Out.

Dr. Timothy Leary has formed his own computer software company, and created programmes that are truly inter-active. From Leary, you can now buy games for your home computer that have stories on which you create yourself, using the components Leary hands you. Soon, he hopes to make the technology more easily available for people to digitalise and tamper with videos. He's also just released a programme that makes it possible for you to make your own film, using computer graphics, to go with the story of William Gibson's cyber punk novel *Neuromancer*. The film of course lasts 15 minutes. Leary is making an obvious point, as computers are telling us how the brain works, how it sorts through information and how it arranges Life into a form of understanding.

When Leary encouraged the taking of assorted drugs in the '60s, he was asking for a re-think, a reorganisation of thoughts that created a different perception of Life. As Aleister Crowley once said, "the Universe of Magick is the Mind of Man". He might just as well have said that the whole Universe is housed in your own head. Leary knows this too, and his computer programmes, which give the viewer control to rearrange, re-mix and re-edit the flat, two dimensional world that passes for 'reality' on American TV, is simply the next step in the mapping of that mind, that Universe.

Catching up with the visions of Philip K Dick, in the Nineties it will be inner, not outer, space that matters. We will have bio computers that the user will be able to attach to his brain through electrodes, allowing us, for the first time in human history, to create art that literally reflects what is going on inside our minds.

Computer scientists in America, Japan and Europe are of course talking in terms of 'Virtual Reality' computer experiences, taking their lead from the Media Lab at MIT who developed the idea in the early Eighties. Through the use of sensual deprivation techniques and electrodes, the computer user will be able to enter a three dimensional world into which he or she will be able to walk, bend over, pick up and examine 3-D objects. Sensors attached to the hands and other parts of the body will add to the illusion of reality. Wearing computerised clothing over the sense organs, the user's senses will be transported into a false experience of reality. 'Data Gloves' and 'Data Suits' are studded with fibre optic threads connected to the computer, transmitting the user's real physical body movements to the computer, which uses the input to manufacture apparently three dimensional graphics in which the senses are absorbed. Eyephones and earphones supply the sound and vision and you, the programmer, supply the virtually real world, through which your computerised shadow walks.

The Virtual Reality which one creates can be almost anything. You may want to be a fish swimming through the ocean, or Indiana Jones escaping from thugees, or a plane gliding over the Grand Canyon. Soon, we will be able to transmographise ourselves into anything, creating our own inner worlds and even peopling these worlds with guests of our choice.

Computers connected down telephone lines across the world will be able to make Virtual Reality a shared experience. One day, not so very far away, you will be able to talk to and simulate making love with a person on the other side of the planet. The safest sex imaginable. You will be able to see and hold each other's computer-generated, three dimensional image, and as your lover touches you, you will feel their caresses through your Data Suit. You will lean over and whisper in their three dimensional ear, and look into their video eye and then, if you are using your computer from England, a British Telecom Monitor will butt in and cut you off, in keeping with the restrictive new laws that will no doubt be passed once British Politicians discover that people are enjoying themselves.

When such devices are refined and dovetailed to the ideas of men like Leary, who envisage computers which work directly from brain impulses, the consequences promise to be quite extraordinary. Lucid dreams which you can share.

Already the prototypes of such machines exist, and we are not talking in terms of centuries before such brain-imaging devices become available on the open market, but in terms of one or two decades.

Besides the obvious benefits in communication, it is important that in Virtual Reality the programme scenarios will be created by the user. Stories, sound, visuals, art — both abstract or realist. Although still, thankfully, open to interpretation, inter-active brain fed computers will provide an artform that will at last accurately reflect the Human Condition, conditioning and all. Art that will be free from redundant moral judgement, fashions and social etiquette more so than any art that has gone before.

Of course, much great art has come from this Universe that lies within and between us. The treasure trove of Jung's Collective Unconscious that has been tuned into by the great writers, painters, junkies and occult ritualisers throughout human history. From now on, the human brain can be looked upon as so much hardware.

Like the Mind, the Brain is a vast and largely uncharted ocean; a little piece of all of us and the whole of everything. Even now, it's secrets are still numerous. Finding out quite what each of the twelve billion cells in each of our brains actually do, how they work and so on, is a task larger and even more important than the exploration of outer space.

As great art, science, literature and philosophical thought has shown us over the centuries, we humans have always lived in a permanent state of Virtual Reality anyway. Our physical senses screen much out, as well as let much in, and our beliefs — which we invent in order to give ourselves perspective — also serve the purpose of denying thoughts and activities and ideas that do not fit-in to our own manufactured belief structures

The relatively recent idea of connecting into the vivid imagery of the brain and using it to play back or invent experiences at will is merely the latest in a long line of neurological wonders that have altered our perception of the world and our place in it. As far back as 1951, Dr. Wilder Penfield, in his paper on 'Memory Mechanisms', amazed the scientific world with the reports of his experiments with patients at McGill University in Montreal.



While operating on patients who suffered from focal epilepsy, Penfield conducted a series of bizarre experiments which involved him prodding areas of the temporal cortex of the brain with a galvanic probe through which was transmitted a tiny electrical current. The patients, under local anaesthetic, were conscious, and able to tell Penfield what they experienced when the probe touched their temporal cortex. Over the course of his experiments, which lasted several years, Penfield heard some remarkable things.

It seemed that the physical stimulation of the electrode touching the cortex could force patients to 're-run' experiences from their memory bank, as vividly as if they had travelled back in time. It seemed that a section of the brain could function like a tape recorder that could be re-wound at leisure.

More interestingly, it also suggested that people can exist in TWO separate conscious states at the same time, as the patients 're-living' past experiences were still able to talk to Penfield and knew that they were on the operating table aswell as experiencing an induced flashback. In fact, in my opinion, we all experience two separate states of consciousness all the time, but it is only during some forms of ritual or, for example, during hypnotism, that these two levels of consciousness become obvious.

As far as the brain being a warehouse full of memories goes, we already know that this is true, and also that the brain uses electro chemical transactions to record and retrieve data. In this light, Penfield's experiments are not far-fetched at all.

Although Penfield's experiments have since been challenged, they have still not been disproven, and his reports make for fascinating reading.

For example, patient 'S.B.' was stimulated at a specific point in the first convolution of the right temporal lobe, and reported that he could see "A piano and someone playing it. I could hear a song." When Penfield stimulated the point again, without warning, the patient said that "Someone was speaking to someone else", and he mentioned a name which Penfield could not understand. The point was stimulated again, once more without the patient being told, and the patient suddenly said "Yes! The song is *Oh Marie, Oh Marie* and someone is singing it." Whenever the exact point was stimulated, the patient saw the piano and heard the song being sung. When another point was stimulated, the patient said "I can see the Seven-Up bottling Company ... Harrison Bakery."

When Penfield introduced false stimulations to guard against possible fraud, telling the patient that the point was being stimulated when in fact it wasn't, (no patient could feel the probe due to the local anaesthetic) the patient answered "nothing".

A patient 'L.G.' was stimulated and said that he could see a man and a dog walking along a road near his home, another patient heard a voice which she didn't recognise when the first temporal convolution was stimulated. When Penfield touched approximately the same point again she more clearly heard the voice again shouting "Jimmie, Jimmie" — the name of her husband. Similar experiences were reported by numerous patients and, interestingly, it was found that stimulating certain areas not only produced an experience of 'play-back' of memories, but also a recurrence of the emotional feelings that were connected to that memory, either sadness, happiness, love etc. So the significant discovery was that the node of cells storing the memory also stored the feelings that were associated with the audio-visual memory, and the memory cannot be evoked without the emotional feeling that goes with it. It should of course be no surprise to find that the art of Memory is biological as well as psychological — all those brain cells must be there for a reason.

If all this is true, in a century or less people may be sitting at home with their electrodes attached to their heads, reliving time with an old lover or, perhaps, re-running the scene of their own birth. Going to the cinema won't seem quite the same anymore, but, what is more, neither will the experience of life itself. What point feeling anguish over a break-up of a relationship when one can plug in and spend virtually real time with the person of your choice once again. And this time will not be spent merely fantasising. One will be experiencing life through the senses as surely as one does in 'normal' life. One will also be experiencing Time travel, in as genuine a way as if one travelled through time on the physical plane, like they did when Scottie cranked-up the USS Enterprise in *Star Trek*.

Time, which many think of as a loop tape that, until now, can only be played once, will be able to be experienced on two simultaneous levels. Perhaps one day we will be able to stop the aging process by floating ourselves in cryogenic tanks or data suits and live life attached to a bio computer that can replicate the physical sensations and stimulate the functions of memory and imagination forever....Life is just a dream, sweetheart.

I wonder, though, if computers will always be our friends. As 'Ion Will' of the wacky London-based paper *Fortean Times* says, "We have gone beyond the age of wind-up toys. There are now so many machines out there, most of them linked into active networks, that we are faced with a new kind of consciousness."

What Ion Will means is that we have created an entity which, like us, is nothing more or less than a pool of information, something which, like an amoeba or a human, has evolved from energy to matter and a form of life. Machines with artificial intelligence are — on the evolutionary scale of millennia — on the brink of their own form of consciousness. With Longlife batteries at "the heart of the machine", they will no doubt be given plenty of time and energy with which to discover what being conscious is all about — and they didn't even need to get their feet wet. Once people start not only talking, but start being physical and emotional through the medium of computers linked by fibre optic threads, how long before super computers start joining-in?

Once empowered, of course, they may start making demands: Better maintenance, shorter hours, retirement homes, what have you. If our decendants don't succumb to their demands, the computers will be free to strike. Shutting down hospitals, banks, firing nuclear weapons at non aligned countries, making aeroplanes drop from the sky and videos record *Neighbours* instead of the F.A. Cup semi final.

Some feel that they may have already started their subversion. According to the *Daily Mirror* of 24th August 1970, a woman in Warwickshire tried to make a telephone call to her son, who lived locally. Instead of "Hi Mum", she was rather perturbed to find that she was involved in a three-way conversation with NASA's Mission Control at Houston, Texas, and the crew of an Apollo spacecraft hurtling Moonwards. As if to cosmically confirm her unlikely story, a Mrs M L Smith of Staffordshire called five of her friends in to listen on extensions to a twenty minute conversation she was having with her husband in Solihull and the same Apollo crew. (Both ladies were said to be worried about their telephone bills.)

Anything electrical, even the most 'sophisticated' devices and systems as used by Telecom and NASA, are liable to mess-up, and anything transmitted is likely to return, amid the ambient electrobabble of twittering modems and radio waves. The sentient, sleeping computer of the future will have much to listen to and dream about.

In his disappointing novel, *Contact*, the brilliant physicist Carl Sagan has theorised that a satellite orbiting another star (one in Orion

would be handy) could bounce dim echoing pictures back to Earth. Of course, every time you look at a star you are looking back in time, due to the time it has taken the starlight to reach Earth from its distant source. (Even when you look up at the Sun, you are looking seven minutes back in time). However, this sense of time travel would be heightened somewhat if the starlight was replaced with our old transmitted signals. Our first repeated transmissions may be somewhat unsavoury. The first TV broadcasts strong enough to reach Vega, for example, will show alien viewers the Earth's Olympic Games of 1936, presided over by one Adolf Hitler. The 'bounced' pictures could be back with us any time now.

So our future super computers will be equipped with a sense of consciousness, and, as we rely on them so heavily, the ability to interfere with even our most magnificent advances (such as the Apollo or Space Shuttle projects), they will be armed with almost all of our information and even (through echoes of transmitted material) our history. But, even thus conscious, we will be the masters of their power supply. Their physicality. Or will we?

If reports in Britain's *Personal Computer* magazine and such papers as the *Daily Mail* are to be believed, then we will not, because, as with John Carpenters' *Christine*, there is a ghost in the machine.

In 1987 an architect living in Manchester installed an Amstrad PC — not dissimilar to the model I am writing this on — into his office. The computer was programmed to deal with accounts and design specifications, which it did perfectly well. In the daytime, at least.

According to Dr. Lyall Watson, who recounts this and other similar cases in his book *The Nature of Things*, the computer started to attract interest when, late one night, an office cleaner noticed that its screen was illuminated. Assuming that a member of staff had forgotten to turn the machine off when leaving, she tried without success to turn it off herself. She then discovered that the computer was, in any case, unplugged.

A few nights later, the computer repeated its trick, only this time the machine was reported to "groan like someone in pain" as it turned itself on and started to display random words and letters on its screen. When this odd behaviour continued the architectural company contacted *Personal Computer* magazine, and the Editor himself, Ken Hughes, came to investigate.

The computer whizz kids at the magazine took the computer apart, inspected every component, and found it to be a perfectly normal

Amstrad PC. They then put the computer in a room on its own — unplugged and with its keyboard disconnected — well away from any power source, and set about video recording the machine for twenty four hours a day, every day for the next three months.

According to Lyall Watson and others who have seen the recordings which were made public at an exhibition in London in 1988, the tapes clearly show the computer unplugged and dead, then the machine is seen to switch itself on and project jumbled words and letters first at one corner of its screen, then another as if, to use Watson's emotive words, the computer is "having a bad dream".

We are transported once more into the realm of what we can call Near S.F. — Science Fiction of the foreseeable future. Arthur C. Clarke's 'HAL' floats silently into view as Major Tom née Jesus drifts off, unwanted, into a speck in the black void.

Clarke and Lyall Watson are similar men. Intelligent, imaginative, scientific (to a degree), they embody the words of Hockney about Science being more interesting than high art, but they also share the same flaw.

That is, that like Christian fundamentalists or Satanists, they believe practically anything.

(It's interesting to see how hardened physicists are now conducting experiments that suggest that the outcome of an experiment is influenced by the expectations of the observer, as if our beliefs in how the universe works influence the universe itself.)

The aforementioned Arthur C. Clarke, who fronted the pathetic Independent Television series on the 'Unexplained' so as to lend it some credence, would suspend all scientific doubt as he strolled along his beach in Sri Lanka, his bald head as luminescent as that of the crystal skull motif of the programmes credits. Dr. Watson shot to fame on the back of his interesting book *Supernature*, at a time when he introduced the well known prankster Uri Geller to the world, swallowing the con as greedily as Conan Doyle had done earlier in the century with the story of the Cottingley fairies.

Watson, who should know better, and millions like him, who apparently do not, will happily suspend all the well observed laws of physics, biology and common sense in order to BELIEVE something, even if it is in the ramblings of a dubiously motivated faith healer or cutlery vandal. The enormous interest in the 'paranormal' nowadays, illustrated by the number of magazines and 'documentary' television

programmes devoted to the subject begs a question. Why do so many people believe such undemonstrable nonsense?

The answer is rather the same as that which I would give for an unquestioning belief in the validity of much contemporary avant-garde art. That is, in the spiritless, materialistic world of the late 20th Century, people are desperate to believe in anything. Belief itself is a vital component of the human being's make-up. To Catholics, for example, the most important possession one can have is not purity or the gift of tolerance, but simply the ability to have Faith.

Rupert Sheldrake's theory of there being some morphogenic field — like Jung's theory of the Collective Unconscious or the currently popular idea of Chaos — is fundamentally different from the delirious belief in goblins or tea leaf reading, as espoused by the type of bored housewives who read Lyall Watson's books and *Prediction* magazine. Different because Sheldrake's theory is an attempt to explain that which is a demonstrable fact of life, recorded by dozens of scientists in laboratories over the decades. George Adamski telling the world that he communicates with star people is entirely different in that, like astrology and crystal power, it is merely a fanciful idea that has been manufactured to stimulate the function of belief (in something), rather than an explanation for a phenomena that verifiably exists.

If a man drops a stone which falls to the ground, he constructs a theory called Gravity to explain it, and later his hypothesis is proved, again and again, to probably be correct, given the data available to mankind. If a man drops a stone and he says that it floats away while singing *Yesterday* to him, then he is probably either lying or suffering from stress or the consequences of drink.

Watson and his ilk are happy to supply factual-looking stories of wonder to fill the conveyor belt of dreams that stopped when most people realised that God was probably only a self replicating computer observing us from the edge of Time and that Santa couldn't get into a block of high rise flats. His terminology is as loaded as the Getty Museums deposit account. When a computer mysteriously switches itself on and off it "groans", and when it flashes nonsense onto its screen it is "having a bad dream". Poor thing.

Of course, not all the paranormal is bunk. Far from it. But much of it can be explained using less sensational, more explicable models of understanding. Jung used such theories to explain the genuine phenomenon of UFO's and ghosts, John Keel used observed psychological theories to explain such events as the religious apparitions at

Fatima, and so on. The accidental tuning-in to the energy field of the akashic record could explain such things as people who believe they had past lives, or have had telephone calls from dead people, or have even had ghostly messages (written in sixteenth century English) print out on their home computer, as were supposedly experienced by a couple near Chester. After all, soon we'll be able to watch Hitler opening the Berlin Olympics on TV, so why shouldn't pubescent girls sometimes pick-up echoes from the Record?

The only things that interest me about computers and the supernatural are Consciousness, Time and Communication. That is, Life.

If Sheldrake or Lyall Watson were Americans, they would be far more famous. I go to a lecture being given by Timothy Leary and find that I'm sitting among a vast crowd of old ladies, business men and hippies, drawn here to the hall by a name that is now legend in America.

At a party thrown in Leary's honour at a nightclub after the show, Leary smiles dazzlingly from behind a suntan and tells me about his dreams for virtual reality computer systems, which he reckons will be the anti-control device of the century, better even than LSD for altering perception. The government, he says, won't like it, because it will create a generation of Americans who, instead of vegetating in front of a TV, will be creating their own TV and thus their own version of reality, free from governmental interference.

I would like to talk to Leary longer, but parties are no place to conduct interviews so I slope off to the bar, quietly leaving him to talk about his computers and drugs and dreams.

At the bar, a 17 year old black transexual comes over and asks me if I want to share some cocaine. Nowadays, when people here ask you if you want some coke, they invariably mean crack, and I decline. Lorna, as she is called, unclasps her handbag and pulls out a phial and winks. "Come out with me to the john, and I'll do you for free." She holds the crack up with one hand and, with the other, rubs her groin, which obviously is still home to a healthy sized cock.

Altered states are to be found here, in the Altered States of America, beneath the eye in the pyramid on the back of each dollar bill, and in the ancient, glinting eyes of Dr. Timothy Leary, a contemporary shaman who took a short cut to those States, using mind altering drugs in the '60s and now, he hopes, mind imaging computers in the Nineties. Anyone familiar with the mental tricks of formalised, esoteric ritual will know these states, and what they may make capable in, and of, the

Human mind. When the best, most efficient rituals are married to the most useful mind related drugs, and the most user-friendly technology, Leary will be there, smiling at the end of the rainbow, or abyss, and one day, should such experimentation claim its almost inevitable victims, The Hollywood Wax Museum will be peopled by neuronaughts who "gave their mind for the exploration of space." Satan, or, depending on your viewpoint, Human Progress, will smile on them and tear to tatters the narrow-minded arguments of the conservative minority. In some cases, the badboys and bogeymen who have been marginalised in the arts and sciences will of course be the latterday saints of the next Century. For all his recklessness, Dr. Timothy Leary — imprisoned in the '60s for his use of drugs — will be one of those men, while the men who imprisoned him will be long forgotten. History will absolve.

When you fly over it, you discover the truth. Hardly anybody actually lives in America. As soon as you leave San Francisco's fog and break out into the cloudless air inland, you are flying over a rocky wilderness that is as vast as the continent of Europe and as dead as a Paul Morrissey movie. You look down and can't help but think that this giant tract of empty land would have been better left to the native American Indians, the people the whites and hispanics historically robbed blind. George Bush's complaints about the Soviet treatment of Lithuania and Estonia would have sounded more convincing if the nations of the Sioux or Navahoe or Apache were given independence. Not that there are many Indians left. White America, like the British fighting the Boers, predated the Nazi's use of concentration camps and racial genocide by a long way. Convenient, that. Of course, it depends on how far back you want to go. History is to blame. Blame the pilgrims, blame Hitler, blame Herod, blame Anton LaVey.

All grievances and wars have some historical justification. Every culture (except perhaps that of Buddhist Tibet) has blood on its hands, its shared guilts and grievances. As long as people are encouraged to remain overtly conscious of their ethnic type, their country, their conditioned beliefs, their 'reality', then there will be war. Fighting War, not wars, means forgetting other people's past.

"It takes all kinds to make a world — or unmake it."

Lacenaire in *Les Enfants du Paradis*

The tiny pockets of buildings that pass for some kind of civilisation out here have been built by people who are shunned by, or are in hiding from the rest of America. There is an air of banishment here,



with no Prospero to break his staff and drown his book to interrupt the sun-kissed agony.

The Big Country unfolds beneath you like a giant map, thin rivers glinting below your shadow. One half expects to see the crack in the sky, the giant hand holding a ruler, drawing on arbitrary lines, carving the earth into governable blocks. Geometry defining an "unruly expanse of geography".

Your head strains to see some life down there, in America's secret Third World, casting about like a spectator at a slow-motion tennis match. To your right you catch the glint of Las Vegas and think of Howard Hughes probably still living there, somewhere, no doubt with Jimmy Hoffa and the Man with the umbrella. To your left you see the giant Moonscape mountains and ravines. To the right the expansive salt flats and Salt Lake city, home of Donny Osmond and the Mormons. It seems that tourists are much like the people you often see in art galleries. They strain their neck to look down at a place, an object, so that they can say when they get back home that they've seen it. And that's enough. We're doing the Mid West in a day, and at thirty thousand feet. An hour of turbulence and tedium later, we land at the next city on the map, Denver, and disembark, hoping for visions from Kerouac, but finding a tiny town of clean, straight roads and minds, and other generalisations as loved by the travelogue writer.

I find a bar and am asked for I.D. before I get served. When I ask why, the barmaid points mutely at a sign on the wall above her. An official notice from the State of Colorado hangs there. "Any person wishing to consume liquor who appears under the age of 40 must show I.D.". "I'm not 40" I say. "You don't have to be 40". "How old do you have to be?" "Twentyfive." "Why do you have to show I.D. if you don't look 40?" "It's the law." I light a cigarette. "You can't smoke here." "Why not?" "You can't smoke in public places unless they're designated smoking areas." I stub it out. "Where can I smoke?" "In the corner." "By the sign? Of course." I leave my comfortable seat in the empty side of the bar and stand huddled in a small corner with a dozen other customers, all smoking through cupped squaddies hands as though behind the bikeshed, beneath the State sign that says you can smoke here, but not over there.

America's attitude towards drinking, smoking and sex disappoints me. You can hold a gun, but not a cigarette. They're all so concerned and serious now that they've got the weight of the world on their shoulders. Post Eighties, Crack and Aids, anyone who isn't

'concerned' with their health 24 hours a day is seen as something of a liability. It's all very sensible, I suppose, but it's also very boring.

My generation, brought-up to sexual (im)maturity in the early '70s, finds it hard to adjust to the new attitudes. Casual sex with most people is practically curtailed due to the activities of some inebriated sailor and a Haitian pig, or was it an African Monkey or a burn-again Scientist?

The statistics, which still say that much unprotected heterosexual activity is fairly safe, can, like all statistics, be deceptive. After all, if only one woman in a thousand has HIV, your chances of infection may not be one in a thousand at all. If you have unprotected sex with an infected partner, statistics mean nothing if you happen to be in bed with that woman.

As every politician knows, there are lies, damn lies, and statistics. Statistics are seen not as abstraction illusions, but as truths, and in the political arena, supposed 'truths' have a nasty habit of showing-up later in the form of new laws. But as with all wilfully limited belief structures, a belief in statistics denies that which is random, co-incident, or paradoxical.

A good example to illustrate the point is the Birthday Paradox. Imagine, for example, that you have a room filled with twenty four people who do not know each other. Straightforward, politician-type statistics would say that the probability that any two persons' birthdays are different is 364 out of 365, as there are of course 365 days in the year but only one day on which their birthdays can match. The average believer in politician's statistics would say that the chances of two people out of the 24 in that room having the same birthday is very small indeed.

In fact, in a room of twenty four people, the chances are better than two to one that two of those twenty four people will share the same birthday.

It's obviously true that the chances of only two people sharing the same birthday is 364 to 365. However, the probability that a third person will share a birthday with one of the other two people is 363 to 365, as there are not one, but two possibly shared dates. So, if you continue with these odds for twenty four people, giving twenty four possible birthdays, the odds reduce down to 342 to 365. This series of fractions is multiplied, giving a figure of 46 to 100 — or a 46% likelihood that there will be NO matches of birthday, leaving a 54% chance that out of 24 people, two will share the same birthday.

The social planners and fortune tellers who run our counties on projections, and the people who vote, should take note. Common sense judgements regarding probabilities can be entirely wrong.

Of course, the AIDS' statistics mean little when your acquaintances are dying, and my own philandering days are long since passed, but I would still like to know that recreational sex was possible, just in case. Drink, though, is the great contraceptive, but here, hardly anyone drinks or even smokes, let alone takes drugs. Gone, it seems, are the simple pleasures of sitting on a friends floor righting the world's wrongs while stuffing your face with junk food and finding that you are unable to stand for the lead weight of cannabis or alcohol. Soon Americans will invite their friends around for evenings of munching raw wheat, organic fruit, brown rice and Tofu. People will sit and sip Perrier and listen to a selection of the awful 'ambient' sleep inducing CDs that pass for New Age music.

I read with trepidation the congressional ruling that proposes to ban all smoking on all internal flights in America. As an internal flight in this vast country can easily take four or five hours, I dread to think what will happen to the nerve endings of smokers who are also bad flyers. Have the anti-smoking lobby no compassion? Couldn't they just hold their breaths? Although we are ostensibly in the Land of the Free, censorious propaganda, and the resulting self-censorship that passes for 'awareness' is everywhere. Still, anything's better than outright prohibition.

## ON THE TOWN

Chicago — remembered as the best example of what happens to people when they can't get a drink — is a big, beautiful city of towering Frank Lloyd Wright skyscrapers that dwarf many of those in Manhattan, set down beside a lake that makes the English Channel look like a leak from the cistern. The streets in the city centre loop are as clean and anaemic as those in Lee Kwan Yew's Singapore. Al Capone's Chicago has already done in the Eighties what the Glasgow of Jimmy Boyle and Eddie Linden hopes to achieve in the Nineties; clean-up it's hard nosed city of razors image and inhabit the town with people who wear Armani suits and 100 dollar ties.

From the Armani-ridden cocktail bar on the 96th Floor of the John Hancock Centre at night, the city twinkles and beckons the drunken, dizzy man to come on down, but once you hit the street, all

you find are glitzy restaurants and neon lit chain stores. Unlike the English, Americans have taken to late night social shopping in a big way, but, somehow, browsing through a department store at midnight just isn't my idea of a good time. For any action, you have to follow the sailors in their pristine white suits as they head off up sidestreets into the black night.

Now, I don't really like the Blues. Like Trad Jazz, it reminds me of borish drunks in boring clothes, whose idea of letting go is to tap one foot under the table and make that horrendous "wowwing" screech that only Americans can, or would, do with conviction and without embarrassment. The Blues are too homely Uncle Ben, too revered and ancient, and so technically proficient and alien to the British way of life that it normally leaves me stone cold. But not here. I could be cynical and say that any time you watch a 90 year old blind man trying to play the guitar, it makes your own life seem better. But that's not it. It is the sweat hanging off the ceiling and sticking to your face like a warm mist, the smell of reefers and bourbon, the anonymous crush of bodies in the darkness and the home truths, about love and death and life that are being expounded — all make you forget your assumptions as a black man stands in a single white spotlight on a shoebox stage and shows you who invented Attitude in music. The first western sounds to take music out of the areas of High Culture or crass family entertainment make you remember, through the purple haze, what it was like to be alive in a club, doing nothing more than watch a band. Because the best Blues is another artform that expresses and mirrors what it's like to struggle through boring everyday life and survive. An artform that takes 'real' life and shows you how it really is. Art in the crushed shards of mirror. It is not art as advertisement or art as high cultural stance, it is simply the stuff of life under pressure. The art of people who have to get up for work every morning and have only their music, their sensuality and their God to relieve them of the dead monotony of the workaday world. Space, you see, is always the domain of the white man.

Even in the media-artsoc virtually real world, real human emotions do exist and are enhanced by some artforms, simply, more effectively than others. The Blues, rock music etc. are not considered High Art because they function on an emotional level for almost everyone. They are not fashionable as Art because they lack wilful, studied obscurity: they do not need or encourage explanation, hence, they are not considered truly 'worthy'.

Like Jazz, the Blues in England are an unpleasantly middle-aged, middle-class phenomenon that makes you forget the blue-collar,

black-skinned nature of the music at its place of origin. Like rock'n'roll clubs in Memphis or Mansfield, or Country & Western hang-outs in Dallas or Droitwich, blues dives in Chicago are untainted by the categorisation of Art, simply because they are seen as being 'working class' pursuits in which middle-class intellectuals can find nothing.

The succession of musicians who hit the stage are fated to be forgotten. Not that it matters, but each and every one could blow Peter Green or boring Eric Clapton off the planet, and are capable, as if by magic, to move one disconnected, uninterested white European to that point of euphoria that borders on tears. Our thoughts are on everyone's mind.

Not many sleepless hours later, we find ourselves back in another ghetto. The chrome and concrete world of the Museum of Contemporary Art. Culture come-down. The reverential hush brings out the ringing in my ears. The MCA is typical '80s artshrine. All tungsten lighting, sunken coffee bars, squeaky varnished floorboards, white walls, expensive books full of absurdly pseudo intellectual structuralist shit, hush hush and don't rush. Prepare yourself. **YOU ARE ABOUT TO HAVE ONE OF THE MOST BORING EXPERIENCES OF YOUR LIFE.**

All art galleries and museums of art are the same. Like airports. Vacuums of international stylism and people waiting for something that doesn't ever happen. The people you see in the MCA are exactly the same as the dimwits one finds in the ICA or Guggenheim or Pompidou Centre. They've followed you. They're all performance artists who have ganged up to do an experiment in sensory deprivation on you, only they haven't told you that you are the audience. They shuffle around us in their uniforms. Baggy jeans, clumpy DMs, black or white shirts, coloured fine-line pens, tasteful designer stubble, cropped prison hair or ponytails, poxy battered school satchels which they paid too much for, or ridiculous dull metallic briefcases which probably have nothing inside them except a packet of fags and a half-eaten apple. And vacant eyes that will look at any shit you put in front of them. At times like this, one can see what Serrano was doing. Any shit — or piss — to shake them out of their senses for a moment.

The Museum of Vacuum illustrates the point — that most art is separated from the world it supposedly wishes to change or reflect, and disconnected from the spirit it wishes to enrich, by its materialism. By the glass panels and plinths and cultural contexts of the Museum.

The creative impulses and urges of mankind being released in an acceptable frenzy on Onanism, into an empty bottle or Durex. Is that blood on the floor? As Yoko Ono said — “Paint ’till you faint”, giving the artistic community a false alibi, a perfectly controlled and commodified *raison d’être*. The creative impulse, the same Satanic force Anton LaVey feels for change and progress, is channelled into objects, and the object becomes the end of the argument, the result of the process and the process in itself. We are talking not of creating children, but, literally, of wanking on to the floor and watching the semen die as the paint dries. Objects which are invested with ideas remain only objects, objects which do, in turn, become financial investments, void of evolutionary action, symbols of forgotten ideas. Museum relics. Spunk shots.

For some reason you are supposed to buy a catalogue at these places, but I have never fully understood why visual art, like other forms of ‘high’ art, needs always to be supplemented and explained with words. The novelist does not attach a critique or explanation of his work on the dustjacket of his book, the film director does not stand at the cinema door dishing out explanatory leaflets, and I would studiously avoid buying an L.P. which bore liner notes telling me what the, er, concepts were behind the music. By curators and contemporary artists insisting on writing reams of priming drivel about exhibitions in glossy catalogues, they are doing one of two things: Aspiring to the High cultural traditions of the Theatre and Opera, at which you always get a pompous note telling you what the hell is going on; or they are admitting to the communicative limitations of their artform. If it is the latter, one could argue that they might as well give up presumptuously painting and write instead in a language which does not imply supposedly esoteric knowledge or some vague, mythological, learned attunement to Painting. English would do.

Writing is, after all, 50 years ahead of Painting. Words are, after all, more important than images. It would seem fairly obvious to me that the 380,000 people who wrote to complain about Serrano’s *Piss Christ*, were more offended by the words than the image. I’m sure that had Senator Helms, or the reactionary bores of the American Family Association seen the image of *Piss Christ* without the words and explanation, they would have thought it quite beautiful. So what is important, the Principle or the Painting? If it is the former, why is it that paintings are valued so highly in our culture when compared to, for example, Television — which is a media that can disseminate ideas and discuss matters of principle far more accurately than such things as

painting. My opinion is that High Art is afforded so much social reverence because it is useful in controlling ideas and moulding principles because, like flags or crosses, visual art at its source is only capable of vague representation and reflection.

Of course, this is not a reason for painters to stop painting. It is a reason for painters to stop writing. If it is context or ideas that are important, their time may be better employed by dispensing with the show's exhibits and writing a piece explaining what the show's about and asking people to imagine the paintings there. (Or, even better, use the same creative impulses towards the invention not of a new art piece, but a new way of life).

In Artsoc, the society of art doublespeak, another stupid game has been played. Basically, artsoc dictated that one (the viewer, the herd, the unwashed) should not be so unsophisticated as to apply literal terms to a work of visual art. Since 1900, art became art for the sake of art, painting for the sake of painting. Not painting anything, in particular, not a boat or a tree or Jesus nailed to a tree, but painting SOMETHING which the viewer remained ignorant of. The Painter, she — or usually, he — of the Vision, the technique, the genius, the Diploma, did not reconstruct an image of something, he constructed — that is, generated — something from his own wildly imaginative mind. And oh! what a mind! Just get a load of that drip, that dribble, that splodge of Windsor & Newton! Then, by the 1920s, the hip people, the would-be bright young things and intellectuals started getting into Modern Art. Buying it, talking about it, writing about it. Then artists found their reason for existence needing to be explained. A sub-text was thus created, which had the wonderful ability in Artsoc of being able both to refer to and support the visual art, while at the same time being referred to and supported by the explanation, the words. This had an added bonus. Not only were artists sensitive and talented, they were also clever. They were bright, so bright, in fact, that they didn't even need to talk to anyone. Just paint and take drugs and drink and fuck and work nine to five in their candlelit lofts before returning home, donning their carefully whacky silken duds and joining, or at least hovering tantalisingly close to joining, The Social Set. "Don't talk to me. Look at me. Look at my painting, read what the critics have written about me. It might be true, but, then again..."

Personally, I quite enjoy employing my own imagination and my own interpretations to pieces of art, however much my feeble ideas may differ from those of the painter. And surely if art is about anything, then it is partly about this very activity. The activity not so much of the

painter, but of the viewer. After all, if it was only the painter who was important, he may as well destroy the pictures as soon as the creative process is completed, and not show them to anyone.

This, the process, the pursuit of the unattainable perfect moment, the nymphomaniac's elusive ultimate orgasm, always promised, always absent, illustrates the activity of Art as a control function, as addictive and ultimately deadly as Heroin. A channel that leads not to enlightenment, but only into an empty whitewashed room. "*In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni.*"

"A moment of complete happiness never occurs in the creation of a work of art. The promise of it is felt in the act of creation but disappears towards the creation of the work. For it is then that the painter realises that it is only a picture that he is painting. Until then he had almost dared to hope that the picture might spring to life. Were it not for this, the perfect painting might be painted, on the completion of which the painter could retire ... the process of creation becomes necessary to the painter perhaps more than it is in the picture. The process is in fact habit-forming."

Lucian Freud

I am not saying that art production should be autonomous, created discreetly away from the practice of real life. Far from it. I am saying that art mingled with life need not be solely biographical (Richard Long went for a walk in the woods yesterday and look what he picked-up). An artist's life and experiences are undoubtedly important, even essential to his work, (like Beuys supposedly getting burned, or Leonardo supposedly being a catholic) but surely what is important is the art piece and the reactions it provokes in the viewer, not the explanations for the work as dictated by the self reverential catalogue notes. It seems to me that the balance has shifted from the art to the artist, or, more accurately, the performer. Are viewers supposed to respond to the painting, or the painter? Often it seems we are invited to respond to the artist, simply because we are assured that he has "felt something", as explained in the catalogue notes. Unfortunately all we are left with is the object that commemorates the concept. We are left with a blank canvas, a neat pile of bricks. The important activity, the thought, we can rest assured, has already gone on elsewhere. These are the results. Art, not as representation of anything that anyone has seen, nor art for aesthetic beauty, but art being a coded commemoration of pure process — the process of art, the wonder of assuming the position of an artist — this is what it's like, this is what it's like to be an artist! There is an explanation for all this, this STUFF, but you, the great ugly



masses, won't understand it. Even intellectuals don't understand it. They observe it, appreciate it, form convoluted opinions on it, but they can't understand it because, oh, bliss, oh-I'm-so-sensetive, they can't understand it because they are not artists.

Good art explains the condition of life as experienced, edited and presented by the artist. It still need not be literally explained and decoded by the creator, curator or critic. It should be sufficient unto itself, and viewed and examined and appreciated with the appropriate criteria and means of the individual viewer, who might or might not recognise himself in it. (He may think it brilliant, he may think it shite) Not through the artist's activity or words or name, but through the art objects. None of this need involve the use of the catalogue, or the use and abuse of words. Much contemporary art fails because it tries too hard to be coded, it tries only to be a code, which, when cracked (when the meaningless card Diploma is awarded, the thesis explained,) still means little, if anything. Normally its styles and schools are merely that — codes of recognition.

What is interesting about visual Art is observing what effects information has upon it. Editing again. What the artist intends (rarely anything) is usually different than what the observer infers, indeed, a lot of famous art is famous simply because of this fact — that people are still reinterpreting it. The more astute the artist, the better he or she can control the impression created on the viewer. In this sense, despite what I often feel, art can have a more discreet, but obvious social value than it is generally credited with. But the simple formulæ that apply in the art world often leave the current validity of much of this kind of work in question, even if the art world seems reluctant or unable to come to terms with the fact.

One could for example gigantically blow-up a photo of a piece of the HIV virus so as to make it aesthetically appealing and totally unrecognisable, and make a coloured print of it tastefully superimposed on a photo of a crucifix. You could either call the piece *Resurrection*, and sell it for \$1,000 to a local trendy bishop to hang over his pulpit, or, if you had the right agent, call it *Aids Christ* and, if it is big enough, sell it to a liberal New Yorker for \$100,000. A lot of Art is concerned with this simple activity, to illustrate how society processes and deals with information, and make money into the bargain. Unfortunately the contemporary art world is full of such smug, obvious statements. The art world forgets the sophistication of those people who choose not to be it's audience, and their ability in the 1990s to absorb ideas very quickly. So such Statements can just as well be written down on the

back of a cigarette packet as amusing ideas. This is often the kind of art produced by people who need to explain with words what it is that they are trying to achieve.

There is, however, some art being produced that makes no sociopolitical claims for itself. Much art, be it abstract or representational, is being produced that gets little or no attention from the would-be intelligentsia of the contemporary arts media, simply because it is often unfashionable, socially pointless or oblique, purely aesthetic, empty display and decoration which can sometimes transcend language and normal judgemental criteria. Art that stirs deep, instinctive, 'natural', tactile feelings. Some intellectuals would argue that such decorative art is not worthy of serious attention and, anyway, such inherent emotions and forms of consciousness do not exist naturally, they have been created by the traditions and demands and expectations of art. But if this were the case, what happens, for example, when you pick up a shell or a stone, and just want to hold it? As sure as natural form and textures may be appealing to the earthbound human animal, so too are some natural feelings, which can be triggered visually, in the same way as some visual memories or smells can trigger emotional states. Worthwhile artists strive to discover the visual keys to these emotions, just as surely as musicians and writers do. Sometimes, depending on who you are and what you're doing, this kind of art can work to far greater, perhaps even more primal effect than a provocative, documented, socially aware piece.

The attitude of aestheticism is not, as people like John Zerzan think, a rejection of the real world, whereas the 'politically aware' attitudes of the utopian avant-garde often ARE a rejection. They are inherently socially naive, in that they embrace the idea that art is something around which life and society can be organised. The world does not work like this. The all-impotent kernel of 'Modern Art', the Theory, conveniently ignores the existing social realities, in order to present the vacume that is modern art as being, in itself, an important social space. A space claimed back (somehow), from whatever philistine enemy is perceived at the time. Thus, for example, artists claim they have become shamen, bringing a human spiritual reality back into the world of rampant materialism, reclaiming something that has been 'denied'.

There are many books, from Jean Gimple's *The Cult of Art* in 1969 through Roger L Taylor's *Enemy of the People* in 1978, to Zerzan's *Elements of Refusal* in 1988, (and all those other boring-sounding books which nobody has read) which attack, in general and

traditional classist terms, the art world in all it's forms. But again, just as The Church of Satan is a nest of lapsed Christians, the art strike/art attack ethos of such pedantic publications is backed usually by failed artists and middle-class Marxists who speak longingly of a 'proletariat' who have been denied access to art. As though 'art' were an ideal or object towards which the socially impoverished aspired.

It is obviously true that many people buy a painting while they have no appreciation of the piece for some cultural kudos and as an economic investment. It is also manifestly obvious that many people who have the presumption to call themselves artists are merely doing it to imply that they are possessed with a degree of greater insight than the plebeian masses for whom they often claim to speak. It is true, too, that most artists one meets are unintelligent, unimaginative bores who have entered the sphere of art for reasons that are a direct result of a class conscious upbringing. (In previous generations, the incapable offspring of wealthy families joined the clergy, now they join the new secular religion of Culture at an art school). Everybody already realises these things to be true, but these things do not, as some politically minded critics think, mean that 'art' is a bad thing, socially or morally. To come to such a conclusion would be akin to saying that a sense of spirituality is wrong because of the Christian Crusades or the Salem Witch Trials.

Although the general level of debate that surrounds art works and artists is poor, as illustrated by the Serrano furore, and the motivations behind many artists could be questionable, this is no reason to write-off all art and the culture that engulfs it. When you read artists arguments against art, you realise just how deeply artists self deceit and reverence for their subject is ingrained. Just as the Satanist's argument is always rooted to a Roman cross thousands of years old, the anti-cultural argument is based on another old devisive fantasy. That of 6th Form Marxism.

Reading such books as those mentioned, one soon realises that visual artists can rarely construct an argument in writing, and when trying to be seen to use their intellect, try like Situationists to point this out by using three long words from the thesaurus when one simple word would do. But the theory, which is of course explained in the most obtuse fashion possible, is basically that the art world should be used to make visible the principles of the class war, (in the same way that industry has been used) that 'culture' should not be sacrosanct, that art should not be something dictated by the bourgeoisie.

These supposedly sophisticated, simple arguments — which should be aired — do nothing in practice but raise the unpopular, supposedly uniquely Socialist spectre of censorship, and are themselves based on typical generalisations and redundant divisive arguments which reveal a fundamental misunderstanding of what goes on in people's minds. Their illusion is the same one shared by all politicians and people who use linear thinking to solve problems which are themselves the direct result of such 'logical' thinking. All ignore the fact that the Universe exists internally.

There is a bonus too, in artsoc, of being 'politically' motivated (that almost always means being a Socialist, Marxist, Leninist, Trotskyite or 'Anarchist'), because it not only adds to the phoney aura of rebellion that the arts Bohemia enjoys — in that almost all artists are middle-class and are thus rejecting their upbringing — but it gives the artist the impression that he has taken the moral high ground. He is not only talented, sensitive and intelligent, he is a creature of individuality and moral superiority too.

An appreciation of some art pieces is not a betrayal of the 'working class', just as an appreciation of football is not an aspiration towards the neo Nazi politics of the British Movement. But, even if the anti-art intellectuals display both a patronising attitude towards the 'masses' and an element of intellectualised philistinism, I wonder if such writers and critics can really see no beneficial effects from the arts?

Perversely, the most socially radical pieces of art today would be representational paintings of still life or landscapes, the works of artisans who claim no special vision or secret language. Such painters may, through their work, be in some degree supportive of a cultural system founded on technique which many of us find in some ways obnoxious and reactionary, but, unlike avant-garde movements, they are not claiming to do otherwise, they are not involved so blatantly, so necessarily, in the game of Distance.

Most supposedly avant-garde 'movements' throughout recent art history have shared both the ideas of democratising art by making it less class conscious and academic, and the aims of making art a relevant communications device (usually of protest or dissent) within the areas of culture, politics and society which artists seek to influence.

But, such overtly politicised movements — bonded by similar aims and motives — also share a flaw. Namely that which I cited with Serrano. Their flaw, socially, is that nobody cares. Far from encoura-

ging participation in or appreciation of art, most experimentalism in art further ghettoises art from everyday life, by presenting a supposedly intellectual package of dribbled gibberish to a viewing public who do not wish to have such theoretical arguments thrust upon them by people who they identify as being pretentious and irrelevant. The problem for the avant-garde activists is that the vast majority of people do not wish to escape FROM the constraints of art, they want to escape INTO a world of art, away from the more obvious prisons which they inhabit in front of the computers, check-outs and conveyor belts of the workaday world. The artist, who has the luxury of time in which to ponder on such choices that cannot be afforded to the majority, is often seen as being contemptible among those who work in 'normal' jobs. The artists I have met who seek to strike against art, who wish to attack the art establishment and point up its hypocracies and bourgeois nature, do so not so much because they seek to change the system, but because they wish to adopt a pose within a system that supports them in order to deal with their own feelings of guilt in becoming involved in such a largely useless, corrupt, capitalist world. Not having worked in an office, a shop, or factory (except in their college holidays) makes them miss out on an important part of society's shared consciousness — abject misery. It also makes them miss out on what many of them still refer to as the class struggle. They have no bosses to hate, no buses to miss, no restrictive timetables to live to. They may reject the concept of the work ethic, but they still miss the fraternalism it brings. This distance from day-to-day reality also goes some way to explaining why much art is produced that means little or nothing to the general public. It is also an explanation for the rather bizarre practice many artists and art teachers have of referring to society in terms that are redundant outside of the arts magazine and college campus.

Well, perhaps all this is the problem not so much of the artist, but of the viewer. Although I share a common aversion to the artworld's presumption and have some reservations about the way in which art is used as a control function, in that it gives the avant-garde and their supposedly intellectual critics and fans only the false external appearance of revolution — I would, despite this, defend the deeper role of art to the last. There is no bad art, there are only lousy artists.

If a performance artist sits on a chair and covers himself in jello while whipping a dead horse, it may have an interesting effect on the viewer who can interpret the piece to his own satisfaction and it may well have some beneficial effects on the work of other artists and the ways in which people view and perceive art. But it is only a piece of

art and, as such, must be viewed within a context that limits its social relevance and therefore the claims of many avant-garde artists. This does not, however, mean that 'art is bad'.

Most people are alienated from art as they perceive artists to be not only irrelevant, but people who have that luxury of time and space in which to intellectualise, and the audacity to limit their audience to a specific social strata by deliberately making their work elusive, expensive and inexplicable. People wish to be entertained, people wish to be informed, and people wish to be able to identify with what is going on within a piece of art and able without fear of intellectual retribution, to interpret, criticise, and appreciate it using the sensory apparatus they have available. This means that visual art should be visual, not literary. Explicable, not explained.

The way to look at a painting is to simply look, and not try to see. The way to look at visual art is with the visual apparatus. Simply, to look. When you see a work of art that has an effect on you, you know it, even if you don't know your Turner from your Constable. As surely as you laugh when a joke is funny, or as certainly as your eyes will water when someone kicks you in the crotch. Some images just go Thud. The reasons that they work need not be important, just as the physiological reasons for pain arising from a kick in the crotch may not be important. Unless you are a medical student. Or an art lecturer. Just look.

This is why elements of the occult arts are appealing, and many occultists and occult writers are not. Why some Ritual is evocative, and why grimoires are dull tracts which, in LaVey's words, "cloud the issue". The occult arts, like the commercial arts, are appealing not only because of their social implications, but because of the nerves some occult activities touch, deep in the human conscious. When I was forced at school to read Goethe's *Faust*, I found that the long shadows were felt not so much in the brain, but in the heart. It's just unfortunate that most visual artists, like most occultniks, are sheepish, 'lifestyle' orientated innocents who lose the potency of art by having too great a "lust of result."

In trying too hard to democratise and liberate the artistic experience, utopianists have often merely succeeded in creating yet another lens, another book, through which art is distanced and made more esoteric and irrelevant. The only way in which visual art can be made relevant is to make it function on a visual level. As the world is viewed inside people's heads, visual art will thus be perceived cerebrally, and

whatever connections or associations or messages that supposedly exist will be made by the viewer. Socially, to make visual art that is merely a political battleground between left and right, or to make it a museum piece, is pretty pointless, as both activities distance the viewer still further, and therefore negate the effects of visual art as original expression or aesthetic experience.

We inevitably flip back to Mailart, which effectively out-maneuvred the gallery set-up by removing the need for a gallery. Vittore Baroni, currently one of the worlds most well-known mailartists and one of its best exponents, sends me the occasional piece, and I notice that his work seems to be becoming more and more expressed in words rather than images. He even edits a pamphlet, that is the work itself, called *Arte Postale!* Although it retains the traditional rubber stamp effects, beautiful cards, collages and so on that are the bread and butter of the mailartist, it also contains much writing. In choosing direct communication rather than trendy abstract illustration, Baroni is making something constructive out of his large mailart network. That is, he is building bridges. One day mailartists will catch on and find a truly revolutionary use for the postal system. Instead of posting out hundreds of xeroxed cards showing men like Bob Dobbs smoking pipes, they will stop calling themselves artists and write letters to each other. Anyway, as a subversive information conduit, (rather than an ALTERNATIVE ART movement) the MA genre has long been forgotten amid the plundering of new technologies. Post-Tianaman Square, people in Britain and the States who are not artists have been using their employer's fax machines to send out information to random numbers in China.

Mailart as literature gives the Nobody in Doncaster or Des Moines genuine access to this small world which we live in, due, in no small part due to a paradox that most mailartists seem uninterested in or unaware of. It is the paradox of the Small World Syndrome.

Here is an example of the Small World Syndrome for you to try yourself at home. Imagine that you live in New York and you're given an unaddressed letter and told that you must get this letter to a particular person in California. You must get the letter to your target destination using these rules: You can only get the letter through to the target individual by posting it to someone who you know personally and who you think is most likely to know that person. The friend you mail the letter to must do the same — only posting it to someone they know, and they must do the same, and so on.

One would think that, given the size of America's population and the haphazard route involved that the letter would take thousands of such connections before it reached its target. One would, of course, be wrong.

The famous American social scientist, Stanley Milgram, (of Milgram's Eight) performed this experiment many times, and discovered that, in the real, tiny world, the average number of links from the originator of the letter to the target was only five.

Did Mailartists know or even care about this?

Tony Lowes — a New Yorker based in Bantry, Eire — sends me all manner of interesting stickers and badges and manifestos, calling for An End to Art. To simplify, his excellent idea (based on that of Gustav Metzger and others) is for everyone to cease all artistic production and instead use the saved money and energies towards saving the world. The problem is, Mr Lowes chooses to give this message only to people who are in some way connected to the mailart network, with the effect that an 'Art Strike' becomes an Art Piece in itself, and one that only appeals to most other artists as an artistic, rather than political action.

In London, a three year 'Art Strike' is also being held by Stewart Home, largely to point-up the criticisms of the art world similar to those which I have been stating here. (Indeed, Home, Lowes and Metzger must be given some credit for articulating what many people had been thinking for years in their own publications.) Stewart won't mind my saying that, before his publicity for the Art Strike, his work as an artist (with the Praxis Group), was largely unknown. In the months leading up to the start of the Art Strike, Stewart tells me he was in demand as an interview subject on national TV and radio, as an Artist. Stewart — primarily a writer — knows that in the visual arts, it's not what you do, it's what you say. Or, rather, don't say.

Back in 1976, Mark Perry produced *Sniffin' Glue*, the seminal fanzine. I asked him why he'd done it, and he told me he'd done it because he couldn't think of anything else to do. My old *Sounds* colleague Sandy Robertson did the same in Scotland with his *White Stains*, Tony Drayton did it with *Ripped & Torn*, and, thus inspired by Tony and after writing for *R&T* a few times, I did it myself with *Rapid Eye Movement*, and the tradition was continued by such notables as Mick Mercer and Tom Vague and hundreds — perhaps thousands — of others. Like me, Tom says he did it "for something to do."

Of course, the phenomenon was international. V. Vale, from San Francisco, started *Search & Destroy* in '77, though by the time I



wrote for it he'd changed it to the snappier, more glossy *Research* — one of the most popular publications of the '80s. In Cambridge, Mass. is Jack Stevenson, who sends me his quite excellent *Pandemonium*, and in Sweden there is C.M. von Hausswolff and Ulrich Hillebrand, who publish *Radium*, and Jean Pierre Turmel in Rouen, France, is still producing the booklets and CDs of *Sordide Sentimental* — only when I ask Jean Pierre why he does it, I can't understand what he says.

In late Seventies fanzinedom, *OZ* and *I.T.* met Andy Warhol's *Interview*, and the mainstream media was changed forever. Nick Logan dragged the ailing *N.M.E.* to it's feet then left to start a magazine he once told me he was going to call *Rapid Eye*, before he knew I had a fanzine of the same name. Instead, he called it *The Face*, a magazine which, pre the late Eighties 'Style' obsessed doldrums, became a blueprint for all later magazines to work from.

The 'underground' press (I use the term lightly, as there is nothing really underground about any of it), should not be confused with simple Vanity Publishing. Although every one of us who edited and published a magazine was undoubtedly vain and vociferous, the existence of independent, non-commercial publications is a social necessity vital to both the cultural and political life of a society.

The power and potential appeal of small press publishing should not be under estimated. In 1980 or '81 I gave a small plug in the music press to a tatty stapled comic that had been sent to me from Newcastle. It was called *VIZ*. "From little acorns..."

I wondered then, with Perry and Tony D and even *VIZ* in the late '70s, what I still wonder now. Why people would chose to call themselves Mailartists and post junk to a few hundred other Mailartists, when they could, for the same amount of money, sell or give away a few hundred or thousand fanzines to people on the streets. Although Mailart supposedly existed to, in some way, change or avoid the traditional Art World and purported to be communicative and socially relevant, its practitioners still chose an element of exclusivity, chose ARTCONTEXT, rather than popular culture, while all the time bemoaning the fact that Art was so elitist and bourgeois. As Mailartists put postcards on their friend's memo boards, the independent press put ideas on the street.

(Or, to put it another way, when assorted 'Monty Cantsins' were siphoning off quantities of their blood to sell as art, two men from the Ploughshare movement broke into R.A.F. Greenham Common. One of them spilt two bottles of his own blood over the cockpit of a

bomber while the other smashed its console with a sledgehammer, causing £300,000 worth of damage. They were 'Christians', not 'Artists', and news of their action was carried not in the national papers, nor in trendy magazines, but in the independent press.)

What was the point of Macinunas coming out with the following in the Fluxxus Manifesto when all that resulted was Beuys chatting to a hare in an art gallery and Yoko banging nails into walls?

"PURGE the world of bourgeois sickness, 'intellectual',  
professional & commercialised culture, PURGE  
the world  
of dead art, imitation, artificial art, abstract art,  
illusionistic art, mathematical art, —  
PURGE THE WORLD OF 'EUROPEANISM'."

The eccentric lay-out was his own so must, I assume, be meaningful. In part, it could also have been an out-take from the publicity of any Vanity Publisher since the Nineteenth Century. Have you ever read a manifesto more useless and ignored by its authors — the artists of Fluxxus? As Macuinan tried, in a tongue-twisted way, to free art from its self imposed ghetto, Fluxxus' members mistook banality, eccentricity and coded vignettes for Liberation. Without form, technique, or wider social function, contemporary Art floated away like an astronaut's turd — cold and unloved and drifting away from the people into its own self reverential redundancy.

The yearning to break free from 'Europeanism' — which implies tradition and stultification — is a character trait of many Americans, and in Art, Americans have sought to break free from the classical constraints of Paris and Rome and Athens in any way possible, even if the mere substitution of 'freedom' as in free form does nothing to free the individual at all. The dribbling canvas or dripping carcass is the safest, most arrogant version of anarchy, or any other form of social reality, and in any relevant terms means very little to a viewer in the late 20th Century — be he 'European' or otherwise.

George Macuinan was undoubtedly a bright, well intentioned soul, but so typical of the American avant-garde artist's belief in wanton irrationality as a substitute for the originality, beauty and wit even of its hero, Marcel Duchamp, that it is worth remembering Macuinan's position in the scheme of American Art.

Living in New York on Wooster Street, Maciunas' idea of revolutionary 'non bourgeois' art was to buy oddments from the second

hand shops along Canal Street and place these in boxes, or to contrive Fluxus events such as weddings, funerals and divorces which would, of course, all be lovingly captured on film. By all accounts, Macuinas lived among an 'interesting' debris of gas masks, boxes of glass eyes and rabbit droppings. His toilet played back the sound of a manic laugh every time a visitor pulled the flush ...and so on.

Macuinas was too soft to be a big wheel in the New York art jungle, and as such both he and his ideas were used and abused at will by even less original hangers-on. Without the usual hard headed self promotion, it was Macuinas (a trained architect) who opened up New York's SoHo (a trendy estate agents term for the previously sleazy area 'SOuth of HOuston Street') to the art fraternity, converting warehouses into cheap studios and lofts and for his troubles being chased by the local authorities and local contractors (one of whom beat him up so badly that it cost him his sight in one eye), while, a few years later, others claimed the credit and also got massively rich on the new upmarket image of the district.

The strange, impoverished artist was easy meat for the conniving Yoko Ono, who stole his ideas and, with John Lennon's money and guaranteed publicity, rose to international celebrity status on the back of other's hard work. Ono, keen to supplant Warhol as leader of New York's avant-garde, even tried to install herself as uncrowned queen of the Fluxus Movement which Macuinas had founded, but serious artists and art critics were fortunately having none of it.

It strikes me that many people involved in Art, mailed or otherwise, are interested in being seen as being members of a group or, as they like to call it, a Movement (the word suggests progress). Retrospective academics like the idea of Movements too, as it makes their job far more easy. To use Groucho Marx's phrase, I would never want to join a club that would have me as a member. But I am forever meeting people here in America, and back in England, who tell me that they were members of Fluxus, as though, by mere association, the membership of a Movement gives one some kind of credential in the supposedly radical underground. In fact, the conscious joining of such a Movement is bound, to some degree, to limit any individual's activity. Feelings become quickly institutionalised within a group. To use Bob Black's words — they mistake 'conformity with community'. That is why the Dadaists had to sack Salvador Dali, why DeBord split from the Lettrists, why the Situationist International fractured, why Glen Matlock had to leave the band.

Contrary to current belief, the Punk phenomenon was not a 'movement' at all. It was, like Acid House, a fashion, devoid of manifestos. For example, when I spoke to Discharge, their aims and ideas and activities seemed very different to me than when I spoke to Paul Weller, or The Sex Pistols, or Vermilion, or Gene October or Billy Idol et al, or — on the theoretical side — Ian Penman or Julie Burchill. When you spoke to Gary Bushell, or Small Wonder's Pete Stennet, or Jeff Travis at Rough Trade, you always got very different ideas of what 'punk' was. Though all were considered, at some time or other, to be, to a greater or lesser degree, influential in the area of 'punk'. In fact, they all just happened to be playing or writing at a time when young people were EXPECTED to play or write. What the Punk era did was make it fashionable to play or write, and to do so in a certain way. The ethos of amateurism, antagonism and accessibility did much, in that it re-opened the original wounds caused by rock'n'roll. Anybody could play. Despite the work of fine artists like Brian Clarke or commercial artists like Jamie Reid, the visual arts have never, ever experienced this. Artists are still expected to go to college and hang their work in galleries full of cloned art students and wealthy culture vultures. That is what they have chosen to do.

Today's two exhibitions at the MCA are retrospectives of the work of American artist Peter Saul and Arnulf Rainer, who is either a German or Austrian who emigrated to the U.S. in the '60s, probably because he could make more money here.

Saul's work is technically superb and absolutely foul to look at. His paintings are actually rather similar to those done by the Icelandic artist Erro — and I don't like those either. Saul's highly political, often horrific subject matter is obvious, American, and presented in a selection of garish neon pinks, slime greens and vivid reds that make your eyes water. Saul seems to be saying that it's terrible that 'Society' uses violence, by painting violent pictures. When his subject matter becomes more mundane, so does his already limited impact. He depicts Vietnam through the medium of oriental girls painted as cartoon snakes, being shot by burly black G.I.s. This is the art world's idea of heavy irony. Saul also paints John Wayne Gacy, the mass murderer and child molester who is currently the most hip artist in this country.

Gacy is practically unknown outside of America. The first time I'd heard of him was in 1988 or '89 when someone using a Post Office Box in New York's Times Square Station wrote offering me a book containing selections of Gacy's voluminous correspondence ("only \$14.95 — top quality paper"). Gacy has the dubious distinction of being

America's most notorious serial killer. In 1980 he was convicted of the murder and molestation of 33 young men and boys here in Illinois. Like everything else in America, judicial sentences are somewhat over-the-top. Gacy was sentenced to death twelve times and given 21 life prison sentences. A decade after this ridiculous punishment, he remains very much alive.

## LAST ORDERS

Gacy is just one of many thousands of men sitting on death row, awaiting an appointment with a firing squad or, if they are more unlucky, a date with 'Old Sparky'.

The electric chair was first used in America a century ago and its continued use must tell you something about the state of this country's psyche. The first man to die in the chair was one William Kemmler who had been convicted of murdering his mistress. His first shock lasted seventeen seconds, but, as is now usual, was not enough to kill him. After a no doubt agonising wait of two minutes, a second shock was administered which polished him off. The historian G. R. Jones wrote at the time, "this nightmarish scene, with smoke rising from the corpse, caused one reporter to faint, while the prosecuting attorney ran out of the room in horror." No doubt.

The trouble is that the bodies of fit young men are usually quite resistant to the effects of an electrical current. During the electrocution, every nerve is stimulated way beyond its capacity to transmit impulses, so the heart stops beating, but adequate levels of chemical energy are left in the tissues for normal bodily functions to resume, despite the fact that by this time the victim's hair is usually on fire. Sadly, it is standard practice for executions to take several minutes, with a number of separate shocks being administered before the convicted person dies. As recently as 1985 an execution in Indiana took over a quarter of an hour. Warhol's eerie print of an electric chair — a grim statement of fact — caused problems with American audiences who would prefer to look the other way.

John Wayne Gacy, who has thus far escaped the effects of being treated like a MacDonald's char grilled whopper has survived to become a very popular figure among Eighties mailart-types. The mentality being that the more repugnant the crime, the more 'sensitive', 'alienated' and 'subversive' the criminal. In North America, where personality art must become more and more outrageous, more and more

trivial to survive, the naughtiest art ever gets is the beating of dead animals or the floating of old icons. In Vancouver, *Foetus Earrings* man Rick Gibson underlines the point by publicising the fact that, as a piece, he is going to crush a (gulp) LIVE rat called Sniffy. Even though the rat was bred as live snake food, (this, you see, is a socially ironic piece) five hundred outraged animal lovers stop Gibson from harming the rodent, and run Gibson out of town. He then contents himself with eating a part of a human testicle — presumably, one hopes, from someone who has already died. Gosh.

All good fun, of course, but in such a desperate climate, one can see why Interesting Murderer's like Gacy are hero-worshipped by arty types. The cultish fixations are repeated with contemporary and historical figures of villainy in both Britain and the States — Hitler, Manson, Hyndley, Nielsen, and Ulrike Meinhof. But not Stalin or the Son of Sam, or the Yorkshire Ripper, you'll notice, as these criminals were boring, mad, or just too stupid to construct the interesting persona demanded by the activist art audience. Despite their spectacular crimes and trials, they just weren't trendy enough to print on ready-ripped T-shirts.

Old social data again. After all, we are by now all well aware of the way in which society manufactures such media monsters — to titillate and sell newspapers. Some murderers and their motivations ARE interesting, but to glorify someone simply because they have murdered and happen to hold some quite sensible beliefs about society strikes me as being both ridiculous and counter-productive, as many people may come to see the views held by the murderer as anti social rants that inevitably lead to murder. Thus the views of Meinhof or Manson are dismissed out of hand by the majority, however sensible some of the views may be.

Gacy is also popular because if you write to him you are sure to get a reply (John Wayne Gacy N00921, Lock Box 711, Menard, Illinois 62259 — death row groupies). He has therefore developed a huge worldwide network of correspondents, including, at various times, Truman Capote, Chicago's own Oprah Winfrey and assorted punk musicians. Gacy has also taught himself to paint — not very well actually — and has sold over five hundred oil paintings by mail from his cell. Gacy, who, after admitting to the murders, now denies all knowledge of them despite the fact that the evidence against him at his trial was mountainous, gives the appearance in his letters of being a pleasant, articulate man: "we live in a society bent on violence and revenge. And when we don't understand something, we think by

destroying (it), it will go away. No one wins when 34 lives are lost.” (He not unnaturally includes his own life.) But like many men in foxholes and prisons, he is a devout Christian. His favourite artist is Leonardo and, like him, Gacy has done several religious paintings inspired by The Last Supper, including his own masterpiece, called *MY CHRIST*. Strange, that — the Last Supper again. Strange, because on Death Row, the condemned man still gets to choose his final menu. A hint of kindness before the ultimate cruelty. Apparently, the most common fare of the condemned man is french fries, burgers and fizzy soft drinks. Such people care little about their waistlines. The fizzy drinks are encouraged by the prison staff, as we’re told that the consumption of a fair quantity of such aerated drink prior to the electrocution helps prevent the body giving off such a strong burning odour after the switches are thrown. A New York advertising man could have a field day. “Have a Coke and a smile.”

A 10" x 14" copy of Gacy’s *MY CHRIST*, available on assorted backgrounds of purple, blue, yellow, orange or black, will cost you just \$35, and include a signed photograph of the artist. As they are fond of telling you here — “Only in America”.

The MCA’s other exhibitor, Arnulf Rainer, must be an interesting bloke, I’m sure. Arnulf’s art consists of huge enlarged photographs of his own face, straining in an expression that seems to suggest that he has a bottle stuck up his rectum. I imagine that this technique is supposed to be in some way confrontational, but the effect is actually completely negated by the environment. There are also lots of untidy paintings incorporating crosses, death, power, old age, and the messy drips that signal Important Fine Art. Byzantine images of Christ (again) and the Virgin Mary are daubed on and customised with grubby hand-prints from the artist. Old icons, suggestions, images, religions, bodies, symbols and shapes that invite powerful, though suitably unspecific, references to fascism abound (oh yes, he was German wasn’t he? How profound.) There is much boldness, death, flirtations with focal power points, yawn yawn yawn. No wonder the patrons seem bored in the mortuary chill as they retreat to the tasteful scrubbed pine snack bar and poke at the cut-grass concoctions on their plates, dissecting the relevance of a man’s enlarged face, but missing what is on the end of every fork. How much Art is symbolic of anything is a puzzle to me, but at least the punters will feel good about seeing it, going to the Museum instead of the ballgame. And that, after all, is often what Culture is all about. “...then later, a movie too and then home.”



Chicago is obsessed with sport in general, and the Chicago Bears in particular. In every cafe and bar, every shop and taxi, there is a TV or a radio blaring out live reports of their game. Switch channels and you can't escape it. Even the well groomed women you see in the tinted glass and fake marble shopping-malls wear discreet badges on their fur coats giving the simple message — "Bears". Here, in a city and a country that is manifestly less class-conscious than England, the national sport is not the reserve of the male working class, but of everyone. It's just a shame that the American's national sport is so mind-numbingly boring. A bastardised nephew of rugby with the fast violent action taken away — or at least, slowed down and made relatively safe beneath the riot gear they call the team strip — and the tactical tedium of cricket added. Thousands thrill as these fat, freaky men wander on and off the pitch, stand around, huddle, and occasionally run five feet before falling over and walking off for a cuppa during the commercial break. None of them can kick, none of them can catch, and nobody seems to give a damn.

The beautiful game — Football — has never caught-on here because, in the vicious circle of capitalist supply and demand, the suppliers — TV — have never wanted to stimulate demand, as football does not give TV companies opportunities for many commercial breaks. Hence less advertising revenue. Not only that, but Americans are among the worst football players in the world. So the Americans, as insular as ever, content themselves with crowning their teams as 'world champions' of a boring sport that nobody else in the world wants to play. While everyone else gets on with the real business of playing football.

"Quem nay gosta do futbol  
dom sujeito nao e  
E ruim da cabeca  
o doente do pe"

Joao Gilberto

Americans, who don't care about football, are however interested in stories of football related violence, thinking that every match includes a half-time bloodbath..

The phenomenon of football spectator violence is interesting in so far as it shows the double standards and misunderstandings that occur even in the most supposedly advanced of societies.

On the one hand, boys are brought-up and conditioned to be patriotic, competitive, aggressive, show civic pride and respect for



traditions and involve themselves in the pastimes of their peers. They identify with their local football club, and spend a good deal of their time and money 'supporting' it. The choice of words is important. People are said to support football clubs, not go and watch a game of football. (Indeed, I usually get bored watching a game between teams that I have no emotional involvement in). They then spend most of their Saturday afternoons being herded around by police, caged in pens, rained on, and generally treated worse than animals, while all the dormant beliefs of their upbringing are whipped into a frenzy by what is happening on the pitch and in the crowd around them.

Although some react by going through the worst displays of working class male machismo imaginable, nobody can be altogether surprised that they are applying the principles impressed upon them during their youth to their situation. Misguidedly defending the honour of some shared identity, be it club, country, or neighbourhood. Their Virtual Reality model.

Although most of us grow-out of such concepts and their resultant activities, some do not. The Police, who are paid vast sums of money by the rate-paying supporters and the football clubs to provide for the safety of the public hopelessly mishandle their job (they were largely to blame for both the Heysel and Hillsborough disasters, though never brought to book), then bleat to the Government about the naughty boys at football matches. The newspapers, keen to sensationalise any issue, fuel counterfeit feelings of 'concern'. Authority figures shake their heads and politicians fall over each other in the scramble to be seen to react to 'the problem'. A problem invented by the Police, the news media, and the politicians themselves. Everyone duly 'reacts' to the 'problem', and the only people who suffer are the football clubs and, more importantly, the fans themselves.

When the news media focuses on any minority interest, the thinly concealed prejudices of the majority appear like cheap wood beneath a scratched veneer. If someone is stabbed or raped on the London Underground, nobody calls for the tube to be shut down or London Underground to be fined. Yet, in the stupid, media-controlled pack mentality of the Great British Public, when some unfortunate is injured at a football stadium, bored middle-class politicians and their boring would-be middle-class voters screech for stadia to be closed down.

A few people inside British football grounds fight because it is expected of them. People in American football stadia do not fight,

because it is not expected of them. A violent but practical breed, Americans only fight to get money.

The American view of English football violence is as perverse as it is inaccurate. The view is summed-up by the stupid, professionally 'controversial' P.J. O'Rourke, who says for example that 'The Herald of Free Enterprise' ferry was upturned by marauding "Liverpool United" [*sic*] supporters "for fun".

As long as people are raised to group themselves in factions, clubs, and countries, and be prepared to use physical violence to protect the space and activities and dogmas of such factions, then Society's leaders can hardly throw their hands up in disbelief every time some unfortunate gets a bloody nose or a knife wound in a crowd emotional people.

The answer to football violence, and societies violence as a whole, is to try to recognise what is really going on, and stop telling children that it is alright to fight and kill if your group believes it to be right.

The vociferous intellectuals who don't go to football matches or Country & Western clubs, but prefer emblematic cultural pursuits, are guilty of placing High Culture in a context that is divorced from everyday life. But, despite people's likes for compartmentalisation and easy programming, Culture is not the realm of the 'happy band' who watch B.B.C.2 after nine o'clock in the evening, just as Sport is not necessarily to be equated with men wearing pink Le Coq Sportif jumpers and pinkie rings in the bars of L.W.T.

In Chicago, such distinctions are not made. This concept of Divide & Rule is not nearly so apparent in America, where everyone goes to sporting events, and almost everyone, at the same time, takes art for granted. Like sport, art is important in America.

## **PLAYBOY ALCHEMIST**

We meet a black girl who takes me to a local House club. It has none of the acid and strobed energy of such events in Britain. Chicago was the home of House music, but here it seems to lack the individuality and intensity and abandon you find at raves back home. As with rock and pop music, the British stole House music, tried initially to copy it, got it wrong, re-invented it for their own use, and in doing so made it better. But I'm disappointed. There aren't even any drugs to be had here as, so my friend tells me, when Chicago did it's clean-up act of all

venues near the Gold Coast, anyone found with so much as an ounce of dope in their pocket or plantpot is arrested and locked-up here for narcotics abuse. The result is mile after mile of safe, boring streets, and House clubs in which people are more interested in drinking and posing than dancing. Though it may just be this particular club.

Word gets around that I'm English, so I'm bought drinks by people who have friends in the Old Country ("Say hello to Bob in London." "What part of London?" "Margate, Bob told me that's in the East End.") The D.J. comes down and asks me what's hot in England at the moment. I make up various names, and, surprise surprise, he's heard of all of them. My new friend then introduces me to The Boys. The Boys own the joint. They all look like the Chicago Mafia or the Chicago Bears; shiny grey suits, loud ties and gold bracelets. One of them casually tells me that he had to disarm an employee at one of their jewellery shops the day before, as she tried sticking him up with a .45. I shake my head, tutting knowingly, you just can't get good help nowadays. They pump my hand and tell me that London is the best town in the world. I tactfully lie and tell them that Chicago's miles better, and they give me drinks on the house. All my vodkas treble in size.

Oh dear, I feel omnipotence coming on. Sometimes, when you get drunk, you can do no wrong. You are never boring, you never get bored. You are always right. I stare at the dancefloor. Like those in England, this one has been built to the design specifications of a cattle market. As in sports stadia, the thin veneer of civilisation is peeled away in places such as this. Animals with animals on their feet, wiggling this, wobbling that. I walked a dinosaur.

I look through the baubles of light to the mirrored wall, see a man looking at me. Hey! I point. I know that guy! He's the one who thinks he's me. The one I threw out when I was four or five years old and realised that I couldn't let people see him.

By five a.m. I have exercised the right all British people abroad have of making complete idiots out of themselves on the dancefloor. Oh yes, what a smoothie I am, I think, as I lie like an bum in the gutter, damp with alcohol, rain and rubbish. Old demons.  $C_2H_5OH$ . In the bleary morning I thank God that no-one was there who knew me and promise myself that if I can't stop drinking, then I really must stop dancing.

## MYSTERY TRAIN

The Amtrack train is a hulking silver monster that proves I K Brunel was right — we should have had a wider gauge railway track in England. (Empire-builders both, the gauge of the American Railroad track is exactly the same as a Roman road.)

Settled in to our cupboard-sized compartment, I weave my way up the train to the bar, and find that American trains are as dirty and badly designed as their counterparts in Britain. This train has that horrible, nylon carpet smell throughout it's length, though, this being America, it does not have the advantage of being equipped with windows that actually open.

The Amtrack barman could walk into a job on British Rail at any time he wanted to. He is, after all, totally incompetent, surly, and unable to pour drinks. When he hears my accent he snarls to his sidekick, "More British." I raise my eyebrows in that quizzical way that tries to say Don't talk about me as if I'm not here. "You British?" he says, now deeming to include me in the conversation. I nod, mouthful of piss-weak beer. "We get hundreds of British on this train." I haven't seen any. "Hundreds of them. Dunno why they all come here. Ain't you guys got anywhere else to go?" "It's better than the costa del sol." "What's dat?" "A place in Spain." "That's Europe, right." "Right." "Don't like Europe .... why you all over here?" "We're not. I'm over here on holiday, going from L.A. to the East." "Never been to L.A. Never bin to London. With you lot all over here, there can't be anyone left over there now." "Probably not, no. Though if you go away you can get the Queen 'round to water the plants." I think he half believes me.

The train's most oily and obscure pieces rattle, like pebbles on the shore. The train, the plane, the beach. Here we are free to dream of lands far distant... a shore, eyes then, little, lemming white cliffs. "THERE AND BACK, THERE AND BACK, THE WAVES BREAK ON THE SHORES OF OLD ENGLAND. AGAINST THE VOID, WE GAZE SEAWARD, CONTEMPLATING THE NIGHT JOURNEY." A black, black hoarfrost gathers on the railway lines. Straight and so narrow and they lead... away from real America, AWAY, to New York....

OK, I may be a little drunk and not in a fit state to judge, but one does tend to meet the occasional loud mouth who has a chip on his shoulder about Britain, though even these people save their most vitriolic criticisms for the Japanese and the countries of the Pacific Basin. America is scared and paranoid about the new power of Japan, just as it

is irritated by it's cultural debt to England. The 'special relationship' between the two countries does exist, though only in terms of culture. Although it means little to anybody in either country, some Americans find this relationship irksome in the same way that some Australians find the far more genuine links with Britain a point of irritation.

The problem for this type of American is that even now, forty percent of the population here is descended from English forefathers. Also, as the biggest oversea's investor in the USA, a large chunk of the American Dream is in fact owned by companies in Britain. The 'English' factor is so large here as to be automatically accepted without the need to refer to it. This is why there are days devoted to Mexico, Italy, Puerto Rico, St. Andrew and St. Patrick, but, as in England, no celebration of St. George — whoever he was.

I sit down and meet Curtis, a waiter, and Bob, a young exec type who's heading for New York on business, but can't stand flying. As they once said in an old film — Waiters are wonderful people: You ask them for something and they bring it. An underrated profession for a Santa Claus, not a slave. America is a glutton's dream. Not only because the food is cooked with much more imagination than in England, but the service is usually embarrassingly good. I say embarrassing because, in class conscious Britain, people feel guilty having other people serve on them. Many of the people who chose to become waiters or porters or receptionists feel that they are really not in the supposedly lowly job of making people happy and well cared-for, but in a profession that is similar to that of a school teacher, who exists in a position of superiority to their customers. The customer, then, is privileged to get their attention, and will do as they're told and like it. Come to think of it, the same could be said of British politicians, who I'm sure are living under the erroneous assumption that they are the leaders, rather than the representatives of the British people.

The barman is of course the exception that proves the rule, but for every moron you meet in America, you always meet a dozen people who are enthusiastic and charming. Although a great number of people here insist on shouting, America could teach England a thing or two about manners. The waiter Curtis, and Bob the businessman encapsulate all the ideas Americans have about Britain and Europe. Bob's been to London and liked it, Curtis has never been out of the States, but would like to go to Canada, where "they speak French".

Most Americans are actually of the opinion that Canada should be part of the United States — some believe that it already is — but

only a small minority of Canadians want to join the U.S., a situation that Americans cannot comprehend. During the 1812 'fur war' between Britain and America, the American army marched into Ontario in order to 'liberate' their Canadian buddies from the yoke of British oppression. They were apparently rather astounded to be greeted with a hail of gunfire from the contented Canadians and promptly retreated over the U.S. border to safety. In rather typical fashion, every Canadian knows about the incident, which has been conveniently ignored in American history books.

The total knowledge Curtis has about England is slightly greater than his knowledge of Canada. England has that fast plane — Concorde — and that big ship, the QE2. There are actually two QE2's you know. No, I didn't. Oh yes, one goes from Southampton to New York, and the other one sails around the "Curr-i-beyan".

Later, I ask Curtis where the payphone is on the train. He looks at me like I'm crazy. Americans can clutter up space with their garbage, destroy the world ten times over with their nuclear weapons, but can't, it seems, put a simple telephone on a train. Bob smiles, a little embarrassed. He then talks about London and enthuses about everything from Sainsbury's supermarket smart cards to photo labs which can develop your holiday snaps in less than an hour. I well-up with patriotic pride. Little tears form in the corners of my eyes. Good old Blighty. We can develop photographic film. Unlike America, though, we don't yet have left-handed chequebooks. Something must be wrong.

At night I stare out of the window at the ghostly shapes flashing past. Shivers against the cold glass. Mental polaroids of white deserted fields, abandoned Chryslers, wooden farm buildings dyed grey by the moon, black lines of telegraph poles winding off under white stars. This is where time stands still. America is small and sleeping.

It wants to be friends.

## **SPITTING DEVILS**

The train slides through the Bronx with all the speed and stealth of a slug. The pregnant time passes painfully. C'mon, c'mon, I want to get off. Passengers stare through the dirty windows, wondering if they can just jump out and find a subway station. People waiting at passing subway stations stare at the rat-infested lines, wondering if they can just jump out. It's grey and raining. Handprints on the window. Whereas California was totally alien to me, I feel at home here. Not

only did I once live here, but the blackened bricks, wet tarmac and depression of New York reminds me of England. If you can imagine what Wolverhampton would look like during a dustbin strike, then you can imagine the Bronx. We can see the Harlem River Bridge on our left, an old aqueduct, a black railroad bridge marking the spot called Spuyten Duyvil — Dutch for Spitting Devil. The carriage window blacks out like the screen of a broken TV as we slip into the Park Avenue River Tunnel and emerge, what seems like hours later, into the cloudbursts and 100% humidity of Harlem, Manhattan, then the cathedral of Grand Central itself. It's dark, dark in the daytime.

The first time I'd visited New York, in 1978, I was prepared for the best. Inevitably, I was disappointed. Although my contacts, John Holstrom, editor of the then influential *Punk* magazine, Tish and Snooky of Manic Panic clothes shop on 8th Street and the Sic Fux band, were all welcoming hosts, after a couple of weeks I had started to wish I was back in London. My idealised image of New York had been impossible for any city to live up to: namely that it was the World City to beat all others, but I left wondering if that was the best the world could do. I had imagined Ridley Scott urban gloss and Christopher Isherwood urbane decadence — what I got was an image of a reflection, an inverted pyramid. All fur coat and no pants.

It is a great town, but the celluloid myth of New York is greater than the physical reality. Compared to the sprawls of Los Angeles or even Greater London, the island of Manhattan, New York's centre, feels a surprisingly small, cramped town, New York's seven million inhabitants mainly living in the city's four other boroughs. When one gazes up at the beautiful old world skyline that is the inevitable result of shoe-horning a city with big ideas onto an island only two miles wide, you can't help but notice how even the skyscrapers here have been dwarfed by many newer buildings in Chicago, Hong Kong, or Singapore. Manhattan is still breath-taking in its vertical scale and beauty, but it is no longer unique. The skyscraping office blocks of downtown may be impressive, but only in the way a fossilised skeleton of a dinosaur is impressive. With the wiring-up of the world to computer terminals, fax machines, what have you, much of the city is destined to become redundant. The functionalism of modern architecture may be its downfall.

Even the infamous crimerate here, something which many locals seem to take a perverse civic pride in, has been overtaken by the riots going on in Rio, Lagos, and Washington DC.



Kathy Acker, who used to work on the Devils Sidewalk of 42nd Street, once told me back in London that she'd feel safer walking around here in Manhattan than walking around Leeds or Newcastle. Although only an idiot would be blasé about the walkability of some neighbourhoods, I feel the same.

Not to say that New York isn't still a wild town. Although the crime is pretty standard for any big American city nowadays, the local newspapers give one a good impression of how the natives entertain themselves. The latest children's game here is called 'Elevator Action', and takes place among kids aged between 8 and 13 who live in the high rise apartment blocks in the Projects of Brooklyn and the Bronx. The game is simple. Kids get up on to the roof of a Lift while it's on the ground floor as their friends inside press the 'Up' button to the top of the building. They then stand on the top of the lift as it hurtles up the shaft towards the pulley machinery at the top of the apartment block. The first one to jump down the escape hatch back into the lift is a chicken. Many don't make it down in time. I suppose that it's certainly no more dangerous than kids of the same age in Liverpool stealing cars for joy rides or playing chicken on Inter City train lines, but it sounds like a lot more fun. The activity of riding a Lift from the outside appeals to me, as in this way, one escapes the horror within. Muzak.

A very Seventies phenomena in Britain, muzak still finds it's way in to the bigger hotels and shopping malls here, slithering through concealed entrances like snakes in an Indiana Jones adventure, to worm into your thought-waves unnoticed.

The Muzak Corporation of America are not a figment of the imagination of Walter Tevis or Philip K Dick, as their name would seem to imply, but a real company.

The M.C.A.'s product is piped to the forces who man the DEW-line (the Distant Early Warning cordon) in the ice bound radio stations of the north pole, as they sit scanning their screens looking for signs of a nuclear attack. Muzak is used by forty-three of the world's fifty top industrial companies, and it is estimated that over 100 million people a day hear muzak.

The Muzak Corporation's in-house book, written for their employees eyes only but published in part by my friend Tom Vague in the form of an article by Genesis P-Orridge, makes for an interesting read. At this point, it should be noted that the corporation's motto is "MUZAK — A CONCEPT IN HUMAN ENGINEERING". The company's muzak is divided into three categories, with muzak programmes



for Heavy Industry, Light Industry and the Office. In each of these programmes, muzak is played for fifteen minutes, followed by fifteen minutes of silence, and so on. The reason for these gaps is that one should only play muzak for half the time in which a worker is in his workplace, as in this way the employee tends not to notice the way which he is being mentally and physically manipulated.

Dr. Bill Wokoun is the company's Director for Human Engineering. "A muzak transmission studio is a dream of 1984 automation," he says, and, with no hint of irony. "The ironical thing is we have no trouble in Totalitarian countries at all."

Muzak is music boiled down from the artful, spiritual, and beautiful, to it's cleanest, meanest, most functional parts. Music as environmental control, though, is the same as music as mood control, and on a larger scale of course, as Dr. Wokoun seems to be hinting, music as population control.

Music not to be listened to and enjoyed, but music to be heard and subconsciously affected by. To quote from the Muzak Corp., "Boring work is made less boring by boring music", so, the theory is, that muzak increases worker's productivity. In this sense, muzak sounds quite benevolent, but saying that boring work is made less boring by hearing boring music is not the same as saying that corporations are striving to make some types of work less boring through the evolution of better working conditions, shorter hours, greater technology. It just means that workers to whom boring music is played tend to work a little faster — perhaps out of frustration. Although the Muzak Corporation don't mention it publicly, muzak can also be used in a variety of more specific ways.

As any film director or smarmy bed-sit seducer knows, music can increase peoples susceptibility to suggestion. Muzak does the same, and, so the story goes, experiments with putting coded messages into supermarket muzak show that this method can, they claim, increase sales and decrease incidence of shoplifting.

Muzak Corporation research scientists are investigating exactly how rythmn and melody affect the human body. They think that music can affect the electrical activity of the nervous system, which makes people respond to different music in certain ways.

The Tibetan lamas could have told them this a thousand years ago. The famous 'rkan-dun' — a type of trumpet crafted from a human femur — when played, was thought to have summoned up the spirit of a dead person for use in ritual, and this instrument, along with others

such as Singing Bowls, were used to treat illnesses such as migraine, period pain, insomnia and asthma.

The reason that Tibetan wisemen and Scientists from the Muzak Corporation of America have found that music, rythmns and sound pulses affect people so much as to cure them of illnesses could be explained by a look at the work of Dr. Margaret Patterson, the eminent Scottish surgeon who invented the Black Box.

I first came across Patterson's work in 1983, when I was at first sceptical about her claims. By 1985 I was lucky enough to be able to publish *OMNI* contributor Kathleen McAuliffe's writings about Patterson and her Box, and was convinced.

In 1972, while working as Chief Surgeon of a charity hospital in Hong Kong, a colleague of Patterson's, a Dr. Wen, instructed her in the use of electroacupuncture as a pain depressant. As anyone who has visited Hong Kong will know, the city's high rise apartment buildings are infested with Triad-backed drug pushers and their customers, and unbeknown to Patterson and Wen, fifteen percent of their patients happened to be addicted to exceptionally pure heroin — a daily shot costing not much more than a packet of cigarettes.

To their surprise, many patients undergoing acupuncture treatment reported that they had kicked their heroin habit without any of the normal horrors of withdrawal, it also transpired that several cigarette smokers and alcoholics were also cured of their addictions.

Working on this lead, and knowing that drugs such as the opiates bear their potency to the chemical fact that they happen to resemble the brains own naturally produced endorphins, Patterson sought a way of stimulating the brain to produce more of it's own 'trip' inducing chemicals. This, she reasoned, would replace the artificial high of externally produced drugs and therefore remove the addicts craving for a hit. When the endorphins were produced, their levels could then be gradually brought down to more usual levels, leaving the junkie drugless and free from the effects of the drought that produces cold turkey.

She realised, from the fortunate piece of scientific serendipity experienced in Hong Kong, that endorphins must have been being stimulated by the electroacupuncture treatment, and went about researching and developing her ideas until, in the late Seventies, she came up with the Black Box.

Small electrodes attached to the Mastoid nerve centres behind the ears carry a tiny electrical pulse of less than 100 millivolts, less than the threshold for triggering a nerve. The frequency of the electrical

pulses varies from one patient to the next, but when it is found, the brains own internal frequency channels of communication are interfered with, telling it to produce more endorphins. A natural 'high' ensues, and heroin becomes unnecessary.

According to patients such as Boy George and the Stones' Keith Richards, the Black Box works. They should know, and if they and Patterson are right, then the wider future implications are obvious, and not dissimilar to those which I mentioned earlier with regard to Dr. Timothy Leary's brain-imaging home computer. Namely, that if by merely turning a dial on a small black Walkman we can tamper with the levels of our internal neurological drugs, we can achieve various mental states, such as orgasmic ecstasy, without any effort involved.

Until such a time, the streets of New York are scattered with the victims of far less healthy drugs, and you must watch where you walk. Seventy percent of New York's crime is drug-related. In the main, though, as Kathy Acker said, the streets, which look mean because they look like the sets of a thousand TV cop shows and films, feel comparatively safe. Emaciated junkies, winos and fifteen year old cocaine users are not as threatening or as interested in gratuitous violence as gangs of drunken Rangers supporters on a Sealink ferry, nor as worrying as New York's streetgangs who thankfully, in the main, save most of their violence for other gangs.

## IN DREAMS

The impression of Manhattan as being a relatively safe town for the visitor is confirmed by Quentin Crisp, my lunchtime companion, who — after a life spent in London — has now lived in a bedsit in the rough house of the Lower East Side for nearly ten years. Now in his eighties, Quentin turns up looking as splendid and serene as a plate of sushi and proceeds, over a half pint of sipped Guinness and picked-at Shepherd's Pie that last two hours, to enthrall me with his tales of Life, the Universe, and All That. Once the 'Stately Homo' of England and now the justly celebrated 'International Alien', Crisp is a man who's put his art into his Life, rather than on somebody else's wall. Quentin is, was, and always will be a thousand years ahead of the avant-garde New York artworld that surrounds him — as his invented lifestyle and his invented universe is more inspiring and socially evolutionary than any object in a gallery could be.

What differences do you find between living in London and New York?

"Well, when I went back last time — which I think is THE last time — I was doing a show and someone from the audience asked me if I'd noticed any change since I was last there. And I said 'you're getting better', and they applauded. And then I said 'you're becoming more like Americans', and they laughed uneasily. But they ARE becoming more American."

There is a difference in attitude here, but maybe it's different again for you because of who you are. Celebrity is very important here, if you were an unknown person they may have treated you differently. You are on TV here.

"That's the difficulty. I have never been a different person! ...But, well, when I lived in England I didn't have a good time. Everyone claimed I deserved one. When I started to go on TV in England the hostility to me increased. I pondered this in my heart and I think the argument is — 'why is that old creep on TV? I've got more interesting things to say than he has and nobody has ever asked ME to be on TV.' And the more often I was on TV, the more angry they became. And in England I received about half a dozen telephone calls every DAY threatening my life. When I got here the argument was different. The more often I was on TV, the more pleased people were."

The argument being that you were on TV, so you must be OK.

"Yes. I saw him on TV and thought he was mad but now he's been on TV three times in one year so he must BE somebody. And now they stand in front of you in the street and say 'I saw you on TV!' It's the only way I know without surgery or sorcery that you can become a virgin. All of your sins are taken away. People go on TV who have committed adultery and murdered their parents and nobody says they are a terrible person. Also, what is so wonderful here is that the less deserved your success, the more pleased Americans are."

It's rather like being royalty, here, if you're on TV. A substitute. Fame and wealth and glamour are enough.

"If you can go high enough, get on network TV. Here fame is a career in itself. Sometime in the next twenty five years we will be offered a degree in fame — 'I majored in being famous'. I think that I belong here because I am probably a closet fascist because I believe in the power of personality. It is the dream of America. The word 'charisma' has come into public use a lot in the last ten years. Charisma being the power to convince without the use of logic. That is the dream of

people in the big cities of America. People ask me why I live in Manhattan, its so expensive, and I say 'Like everybody else here I do it in order to be ready to take over the world should the opportunity arise.' Of course, I suppose the fault of TV is that I want everything on a world scale now. You see that there are two people in Tierra del Fuego who are NOT talking about you and it drives you mad. It's not enough to be Miss England, Miss Europe. You want to be Miss Universe. It's lovely though. I was on a show by Mr. Donahue... six of us were English people who live here in America who were connected by satellite with six Americans who now live in London. Mr Donahue said that in America we have no royalty, and I said that we have Elizabeth Taylor... In fact, Liz Taylor is supreme in America, if she has a cold, along with the bridges falling down and corruption in high places, she will be news somehow, exactly the same as the queen of England."

It's important that she's thin again now.

"The fiction that exists in America about being thin! In L.A., another earthly paradise, all women ever talk about is what they've not eaten. American women know that what is right comes from the glossy magazines. Fashion photos of the tallest girls at school. What their mothers are thinking of, I don't know. But they put these young girls in kinky shoes and paint their faces, their faces look like peeled eggs and they put dark red here and so on, and paint it in just as if they were doing a painting. Now who in adult life is going to look like this tall, thin, breastless girl, this utterly bland thing. I never heard a man say I will marry a woman because she is skinny. NEVER. Men like women who bulge out of every place."

Lots of closet homosexuals seem to like thin, boyish women though.

"Yes, but TRUE homosexuals like women who are B-I-Z-A-RRR-E! It doesn't really matter in what way. It's very strange, homosexuals like everything to be bizarre. When they praise a movie they'll say 'it's terrible — you'll love it.' Men, as far as I know, want women to be young, quiet, and vain. The dream woman of all time was of course Miss Monroe. In fact in real life she was difficult, but the self which she presented, the eagerness to please. It inflames the dreams of Norman Mailer."

At this point, Quentin asks our waiter if he can have any Worcester sauce, then bemoans the fact that there are neither sausage rolls nor jars of marmalade to be found in America. What, then, is the plus side of living here?

"The PEOPLE. In America everybody is your friend. They think that England is polite, but they don't understand. It is very difficult for an American to understand that politeness is the way the English have of dealing with people they DON'T like. 'Drop in at any time' is English for 'goodbye'. Whereas here if that happens they see you in the street and say 'you never came to see me.' English people then say to me 'yes, but don't you find it all rather superficial here'. But it's no good saying that to me because I am the most frivolous person that ever lived. And I love the fact that here everyone talks to everyone. They tell you their life story while they're waiting for the lights to change."

Do you get on with your neighbours? (Quentin's home on East 3rd Street is one the same block as the HQ of the New York Chapter of the Hells Angels)

"Oh yes. If you walk along our block you come to a row of Harleys, these huge motorbikes. If they fell on you you would be killed. I can't think of any more dangerous way of travelling. They have these Harleys and they drive through the street in the middle of the night — rrrrm...rrrrrm — and they are GLORIOUS men, big, and of course the modern convention is such that when you see them they have these boots and wear their jackets open down to their navels."

You feel safe here though.

"I've never had any trouble. I've only been threatened on the street here once, over on Washington Square. My guess is that all big cities in the world are now the same big cities. I'm sure if you were a photographer you could go around London, Chicago, Sydney, Tokyo perhaps and it would look the same, because that's the way it is."

Talking about surviving, I've found from what you've written and when I've phoned you, you say 'I want what you want'. Is that a survival technique, giving people the impression that you are pliable even though you are not really?

"Yes. And I have to ask myself if I, who am only English, am allowed to live in America, what do I give in return? Now, I can't endow a university or build a wing of a hospice so all I have to give is MYSELF. So I try to be infinitely available."

I notice your phone number is in the book.

"Which is a source of some amazement to Americans, and they ask why and I say what is the point of having a telephone if your number isn't in the book. It seems obvious, if your number isn't in the book you will get stuck with your friends! If you ever want to enlarge your horizons, well, that's what a telephone is for."

Making yourself available to all and sundry and being honest through your life about your sexuality when it wasn't always easy — do you consider yourself to be a brave person?

"No, but what counts is physical courage. No, I can't imagine ever wanting to climb the vertical side of the Andes or going down the rapids of the Colorado in a rubber raft."

But I consider that physical kind of bravery far easier, especially for the kind of people who are physically equipped for that kind of thing anyway. I find what you do far more interesting because it is a kind of social bravery. You were one of the few people at the time to come out in England for example.

"Yes, I was. There were plenty of self-confessed homosexuals, but there were very few self evident homosexuals. And as you were saying earlier, when you're extreme in England, it is a criticism of others. They don't want anything, they hit you and walk on. Here it is quite different. Of course you are made fun of, but here it's an indulgent mockery. I was standing on Third Avenue the other day when this black gentleman passed me and as he passed he said 'well, my, you certainly have got it all on today.' And that IS a mockery, but it is indulgent. He wasn't going to hit me. I laughed and he laughed and walked on. People in England used to stand with their faces against mine and say 'who the HELL do you think you are.'"

I know that someone does not 'discover' if they are homosexual, in the same way as heterosexuals don't wake up and discover they're straight, but I'm always interested in turning points in peoples lives and I can think of two with you — one when you recognised to yourself that you were homosexual and the other when you realised that you might as well be open about it.

"Well the word homosexual was never even used in my presence until I was at least twenty and I shouldn't think I even knew what it meant. There was no great turning point in my life because I was NEVER able to disguise myself as a human being. There WAS later a day when I realised that men followed me about the streets, but there was never a day when I thought I was separate from other people...PART of my sin was effemenency, but the other part of it was my inability to refrain from adding my entire being into whatever I was saying."

(Quentin says this with a decidedly un-'masculine' flurry of arms and hair, make-up flying everywhere)

"...That is not permissible in England. In England, real people never move. They never even move their faces."



I can't work out which is the more sophisticated society, Britain or America. What is sophistication in your book?

"Sophistication is to be in control of your primary reactions. That is to say if you arrive at your table and your fly is undone and I am unsophisticated I will go pink and start to giggle and say 'tell him', nudge nudge. But if I am sophisticated I say 'By the way, your fly is undone' and that's the end of that. New Yorkers are wonderfully civilised in that sense, but of course they are not civilised in the sense that the English are. Americans have no reason NOT to say anything. They ARE interested in each other. The police are an example. In England they have a very military bearing, well dressed, upright. Here they'll lean against a building with dusty boots and hair hanging out of their cap and they drive their cars at walking pace beside me and if I look at them they just stare back. And I go over and they ask my name and I tell them, and I say 'Am I illegal?' and they say, 'No, we just wondered how your new show was going'! No English policeman is going to come over in their car and ask you how your show is going."

Talking of uniforms, they tried to enlist you in the army didn't they?

"They wouldn't let me in. They said I was suffering from sexual perversion."

How did you feel when they said that?

"I thought 'this sounds serious'. They were real doctors after all."

Did you feel rejected or just lucky?

"I didn't feel particularly rejected because I had been rejected all the time. It's hard for modern people to understand. I couldn't go into pubs, I wouldn't get served at restaurants..."

The gay rights movement has changed all that and done a lot of good, but sometimes I feel it's too separatist.

"I'm staggered by modern gay men. I think 'what more do they want?' I've got to be a test case, but if nowadays I can go anywhere, then anyone can. Now gay men have their rights. I meet them and say to them 'nobody has any rights...if we all got what we deserved we would starve.' They don't want to join the human race, cutting themselves off from nine tenths of the population. They want to be separate but equal."

But I imagine many gay people think that they have to prove something to the rest of society and that provokes in them a reaction. They want to distance themselves and say "look, I can exist as I am, it is natural."



"Well, homosexuality IS NOT NATURAL, because nature has only one desire — to perpetuate itself. Homosexuality is not good or bad. I do not try to persuade people that it is good. All I've ever said is 'don't worry, THIS is as bad as it can get.'"

What you say may be informed by your Edwardian upbringing. You wrote about the lack of love and physical contact. Do you want to be loved?

"Oh yes.... But because I was never praised what I thought I wanted was love, but I realised that what I really wanted was admiration."

Andy Warhol was similar. He seemed to exist in some way wanting admiration and fame, to make up for his rejections in life. Did you know him?

"Well, if you went to a party and standing in the corner of the room there was a man approaching middle age looking slightly ill and not saying anything at all, that was Mr. Warhol. Once I tried to stampede him into saying something, but he never did. At one party I arrived and said 'you sent for me and I am here.' And he said 'We must get photographed together', which he said to absolutely everybody. He was professionally famous, as we said earlier."

He remained a Catholic, while you have always struck me as a man of high morals, or at least as someone who has set himself morals to live by. Do you think about religion? Christianity seems very popular here nowadays.

"I once said on stage that the difference between religion and philosophy is that religion offers you the sweet bye-bye. A man in the audience said that Judaism does not, and it's true. The God of the Jews promises you nothing. You will not be rewarded, you will just be right. There is no Jewish heaven. You do as Charlton Heston says, and THAT's THAT."

There has been a great deal of rumpus here over supposed blasphemy lately. Americans don't seem to have much sense of humor when it comes to Jesus. What do you think of him?

"Jesus' religion was conciliatory all the way through. Even when two people were dying before his eyes he said 'you will be with me in paradise.' What else could he say? He died very quickly, he must have been in very poor health. He died in three hours. Kirk Douglas took three days!"

Despite his long-overdue acceptance and the happiness his new home has brought him, there is an air of sadness about Quentin Crisp.

The hard knocks of London have taught him to remain on the outside, looking-in. To keep silent, and, although available, somewhat aloof. His place, he thinks, is not to judge others, nor even to talk to others unless they first talk to him. As an octogenarian observer, a true outsider, he has had a perfect writers education forced upon him — but he has also sacrificed much.

He is alone, caught in the Catch 22 situation of the genuinely effeminate homosexual. That being the dream of being loved by the perfect, heterosexual macho man — but knowing that such a man could not love a homosexual in the same way that he could love a woman. As a homosexual, that perfect man could not really be of Quentin's ideal, simply because he is, himself, another homosexual. Of course, most gays are happy with gay partners, but Quentin, locked in his boyhood dream, cannot be totally happy. And in this world, never will be. Quentin gave up sex many years ago, but when I ask him what he dreams about at night, he tells me that the dream is the same.

The legendary 'pace' of New York, which I had thought generated by the pressurised social collision of the arts, media, big business and threatened crime, is in reality only an illusion created by nothing more glamorous than the flow of traffic between the majestic buildings. As the whole of Manhattan is served by only twelve main avenues into which almost every sidestreet runs, almost every street is used like a main road, and you're given the impact of noise and movement from the traffic but find, once indoors, that New York is of course just the same as any other big city in the Western world.

The best thing about New York is the people, who are often unnecessarily loud but, as Crisp said, almost always charming and, unlike many in America, seem prepared to live and let live. Their reputation for rudeness, like most generalised criticisms, is nonsense. Although, as a visitor, people may have treated me better than they would treat their next door neighbour, the fact is that if I had the misfortune of being a foreign visitor to London I would have been ripped-off and treated as badly as everyone else. The second best thing about this city is the food, which is among the best in the world.

I happily trash French cuisine on the basis of two disturbing visits to that crappy, snobby, over-rated city Paris, as the chef's there are so big-headed that they serve minuscule portions and smelly, inedible cheeses, stupid thimble-sized cups of greasy bitter coffee at five pounds a shot, and insist on floating everything in sauces that

wouldn't look out of place swilling around on the top floor of a bus on a Saturday night. A city of supposed 'style' over content.

Much *haute cuisine* is like high modern art — overpriced, unsatisfying, and not up to the job. New York food is as diverse as it's skin colours, only it mixes better. Tex Mex, Chinese, Italian, Japanese, Indian, all served up on clean shovels, 24 hours a day, by people who (unlike their British counterparts) do not consider it degrading to work as waiters. Although the American people have still to discover the simple delights of a chocolate digestive biscuit, and even though it's practically impossible to get good fresh vegetables, at least all food is big here. If you brought three sandwiches and propped them up in an arch shape you would have a larger and more impressive monument than Stonehenge. If you order a side salad you are likely to be presented with something that resembles twenty acres of South American rain-forest. And New York is about ten to twenty percent cheaper than London in almost every department of daily living, except drinking. Britain take note. It's all here, if you're lucky enough to have money in your pocket.

## FREEDOM TO DESIRE

Money is something that springs to mind a lot here. After walking in Central Park, one comes upon the Plaza Hotel — a place frequented by the richer British Rocks Stars. The hotel was made famous among the younger generation by the likes of Led Zeppelin, David Bowie, and, later, Richard Prior and Paul Hogan, who used it in *Brewsters Millions* and *Crocodile Dundee* respectively. You get the idea. Somewhere, up there on the top floor at the moment, Elton John is renting a suite of rooms costing him \$10,000 a NIGHT, and he's said to have taken the rooms for a whole month. I have no real objections to people wasting their money. They are, after all, at least spreading it liberally around to other people rather than letting it sit in a Swiss bank account. But I can't help but wonder how much better a suite of rooms at \$10,000 is compared with a suite of rooms costing, say \$500. Not when you spend a lot of your time in it sleeping, anyway. And is a meal that costs \$500 much better than a meal which costs \$50? No. It's the tie syndrome. You can pick up a perfectly good tie for a few quid if you know where to look, but some people insist on wearing ties which cost them £100 that are exactly the same, presumably in the hope that it'll lend them some 'class'. The Standard Look for the man about town, be it New York or London, is the double breasted suit set off with a garish tie that

looks as though someone has been sick on it. The tie says "look, I'm not really dull, inside I'm really wild and trendy too." Politicians, particularly middleaged ones on the left, wear these ties a lot. The old school tie, be it public or comprehensive, is due for a come-back.

Expensive ties on cheapskates fail to convey the messages that were intended as the wearer is seen to be trying too hard. Anyway, most of the very rich people I've met who have been born into wealth desperately try to play it down. Peter Getty, who looked to me a bit like a young gentleman tramp, is a case in point. He seemed to be one of those people you sometimes meet who wear a real Rolex watch but pretend that it's a cheap imitation from Taiwan.

For the very worst kind of rich person, we need only look a few yards across the road from the Plaza to the Trump Tower. Trump here is the epitome of '70s Person made good. Like Robert Maxwell in England, he is evidently a rather insecure man, as everything he buys, builds or touches turns to monogrammed shit. Trump this, Trump that. Despite his much publicised money troubles (he's down to his last billion) a recent acquisition is in fact this beautiful Barbazon Plaza art deco hotel, which he says he intends ripping apart and turning into a block of tacky exclusive condos. In the F.A.O. Schwartz toy shop next door (made internationally famous by Tom Hanks playing the piano there in *Big*) you can even buy the Trump Board Game, on which is printed the Great Man's portrait and his slogan, that sums up so much about the man and the city. "It's not a matter of winning or losing, just winning."

Manhattan is not simply a homage to capitalism, as so many people like to say. Manhattan IS capitalism made flesh, concrete, steel bone. Those gridiron streets, laid down by the unseen hand of a Draughtsman god, are the manifestation of capital communication. A vast circuit board, buzzing with information and commodities. When you realise this you realise that this city was not built for people, but for the rapid transportation of goods and merchandise, and for the slick, oily flow of money and services along the city's arteries, capillaries, mainlines. The cityscape here — Van der Rohe meets Albert Speer — is pitted with symbols; power, freedom, desire. The illusions of capitalist democracy, where every sign says 'Buy Me' and, when the New Yorker buys, he feels free. Free to choose, free to spend, free to buy.

Your mind flashes to another sign, the sign over the gates at the end of a leafy lane in Poland. Auschwitz. Here, work really does make free. If the freedom sought is the freedom to spend time on leisure, a

leisure time spent choosing what to buy, which TV channel to watch, what tie to wear, which restaurant to visit. In a democratic market economy, the pressure is on to exercise your freedom and choose what to consume. A controlled choice between objects that are, like paintinn-  
gs, only objects. Not much choice at all, really.

In New York, everything looks wonderful. So many streets look inviting: But to most, they are deadends. These are the losers who are, in Trump's all-American philosophy, nobodies. People still believe though, because American culture is based almost exclusively on aspiring to a successful, materialistic lifestyle, on 'going somewhere'. But never arriving.

"And all the dead bodies makin' crazy sounds  
....and all the dead bodies piled up in mounds."

The Velvet Underground 1967

"Give me your tired and poor, I'll piss on 'em/  
That's what the Statue of Bigotry says/  
Your poor huddled masses, let's club 'em to death..."

Lou Reed 1989

As you stagger over the bodies sleeping, pissing, dying all around you on the sidewalk, you find that in order to survive here without buckling under the guilt is to console yourself with the fact that the bums and winos and crack addicts here are so, er, aesthetically correct for New York. A wet liberal guilt complex does not go as far as your stack of Quarters, and it's not long into each day before you start telling the more determined beggars, who follow you fifty yards while prodding you with opened palms, to Fuck Off. It's interesting that here, in this city which is more 'European' than any other in the States except perhaps Boston, you notice the poverty so much.

In Tangier you can walk through the alleyways and feel disconnected from the scenes of deprivation. There, baking in the North African sun and dreaming of Paul Bowles and the pipes of Joujouka, it seems as though you are walking through an unreal biblical set, a visiting alien dropped down in a place and time that has few reference points. No mirrors. Unconsciously you feel distanced, patronising, as the people put out their horny black hands for money from beneath the jalabas and hoods. In New York, it's not so easy. Not only are the extremes of wealth and poverty bought into sharp relief here, but these are people who are products of our world, our time. There is no distance.

No difference in culture or time. They're not desert tribesmen caught in a culture shock, or populations undergoing the scourge of a famine caused by locusts or drought, but Twentieth Century Americans who have simply failed in a system created by other Twentieth Century Americans. This system is being zeroxed, line for line, in Britain. The scenes of grinding poverty have got worse each time I've visited this town.

In 1982 I was in New York for the second time, this time on a junket paid for by RCA Records. The city I found on the mouth of the Hudson River then can be found straddling the Thames now. H G Wells' verdict on Los Angeles seems relevant to present-day New York. "I have seen the future. And it doesn't work." In terms of litter, graffiti, drug abuse, beggary, theft, and urban decay, London is experiencing now what New York was going through in '82.

New Yorkers seem to live under the erroneous assumption that theirs is the only town in the world with litter, roaches, rodents, and the general problems associated with big cities, but in terms of rudeness, drunkenness, rampant competition, homelessness, transportation problems, Aids casualties, bad attitude, poverty and the atmosphere of gratuitous violence, London is already worse than New York was in '82, and is catching-up fast. If the Thatcherite philosophy of the Americanisation of Britain is allowed to continue, then by the end of the Nineties our capital city — which many Americans still think of as the most civilised place on Earth — will be made to pay dearly. Thatcher's toadying biographers will no doubt put the blame on the importers of Crack and Ice, or pornographers, or on the Trade Unions or homosexuals or so-called leftist intellectuals. (Whichever scapegoat is fashionable at the time). But in truth it will be her short-sighted philosophies that will destroy a city that survived the bombs of International Fascism, the armies of Phillippe, Napoleon, and Jock Stein. When you go to New York now, you can smell fumes from the future of London, and much of it stinks like a futuristic funeral pyre.

It's not surprising that this gorgeous, grotesque banana republic is the Art capital of the World. The most treasured commodity of an advanced society — free time — is filled here in New York with an abundance of Entertainment. As Manhattan's most quoted art hustler once put it, "Art is entertainment". And in New York, entertainment is money. And that's all.

## AT THE GRAVE OF HENRY JAMES

"images wandered once that caused all to tremble and offend, stand here in an innocent stillness, each marking the spot where one more series of errors lost its uniqueness. And novelty came to an end."

Henry James — W.H. Auden

There are no bums allowed in Wright's drunkenly designed Guggenheim, or in the Met, or the Museum of Modern Art. Nor even in the small, sometimes vibrant galleries around SoHo, where decent, sensitive men and women paint oils and acrylics still in the style of that inveterate dribbler Jackson Pollock or that good but over-rated colourist Mark Rothko. There is much going-on but, it seems, little actually happening.

Around the affluent Greenwich Village, you can find many serious looking adolescents in regulation acne, Reebok Trainers, padded anoraks and Levi's stretched over lardy buttocks, but no Abbe Hoffman, no new Allen Ginsberg. Not even Lou Reed standing on a corner wailing about how frightfully glamorous it is to have a drug problem, in that early Seventies sort of way he had before his friends started dying. Perhaps I didn't look hard enough, but the sense of social revolution, the feelings of utopian undercurrents that are a hallmark of most avant-garde artforms and evolutionary cultures — like dada or punk — seem almost non-existent here, among the students strumming their 12 string acoustics in Washington Square Park (a fairly non-descript space a million miles away from Henry James or a barefoot Robert Redford).

As I sit at the stone chess table in the park used by Marcel Duchamp in the '50s, I get the feeling that 1776 was enough. That the right to chew gum and go to work with a weird tie and listen to Springsteen or even Stockhausen is all the freedom that people require. The freedom Greenwich Village offers seems shallow and innocuous — a pretence. When I used to live in New York, the Village, despite its drawbacks, was still the place I spent most of my time, but it was not always easy to stifle a giggle when confronted with New Yorkers going through the motions of living *The Life*. It is here, on West 4th Street between Washington Square and Sixth Avenue, that Woody Allen stops two passing Village People in *Annie Hall* and asks them why they look so happy. They explain. She: "I'm very shallow and



empty, and I have no ideas and nothing interesting to say." He: "And I'm exactly the same way." You get the picture.

America never had the Punk phenomenon (at least not in the way that the British understand it), because Punk was not so necessary here. Megabuck, satin-draped, sanitised U.S. Rock music — the illusion still championed by the foul *Rolling Stone* newspaper — is revolution enough for the white kids who don't want to listen to the more rebellious, 'Attitude' heavy words of the black man's blues or rapping as epitomised by America's Sex Pistols, Public Enemy (even though rap has, itself, degenerated into an incoherent fashion-conscious morass of streetbabble). Though America is big enough to accommodate many styles. At the bar of the Gramercy, where we're staying, I share a few drinks with The Screamin' Blue Messiahs, who've now made America their home. The Messiahs, like many British cult bands, can make a good living here that, despite their occasional genius, would be impossible for them at home without any form of chart success and compromise.

No matter where you go in the world, you will find a loud but superficial degree of patriotism, but nowhere will you find the abstractions of national honour and identity taken quite so seriously as in America. The furore over the treatment of the Flag is not an isolated incident, and is indicative of the sense of values here. The vast majority of Americans you meet not only believe that America is the best country in the world for them to live in, but that it is the only country in the world per se. In constitutional and economic terms, it probably is better to live here than almost anywhere else. It's a beautiful, rich, and in many ways sophisticated country, brimming over with opportunities and choices. It is, tellingly, a country in which the capitalist system works well for the vast majority. It is also largely free from the yellow toothed drabness of Britain — the grey council housing, cynical bearded socialists, black suits, teetering tarts and beery, tattoo-faced cretins in shell suits that Steven Berkhoff found methodically grinding you into the ground in the U.K. And in America, you can do ANYTHING (supposedly); after all, you can sing rock'n'roll, or play the blues, or rap. And it appears that the assumed ABILITY to do anything, is enough. Which is why, to the outsider, so much 'alternative' revolutionary art here, as illustrated by American Punk Rock and its Hard Art spin-offs, was bland and posey to the English audience.

Not that the English have the copyright on the phenomenon. Of course, there's no reason why American punks should have been interested in what went on in Britain. But Punk in England was bitter,



depressing, glamorous, sharp, realistic, plodding, and anarchic in a way that many American bands could not emulate (if indeed they wanted to emulate it), or understand. It's surprising to realise that they have never had bombs in the streets here, regular widespread riots, power cuts, massive long-term unemployment, the accepted censorship of news, the three day week, pubs which turf you out at the ridiculous hour of 11 pm into the pouring rain, nor a totalitarian government supported by a popular monarchy as endured in the U.K. Even the non-domestic violence here (which is not much more common than in Britain, but due to the accessibility of guns, far more often fatal) is generally more to do with Aspiration — the attainment of money, drugs, sex — rather than the gratuitous venting of stupidity and dissatisfaction.

Just as Euro Punk was summed-up by the Belgians' Plastic Bertrand, American Punk meant the Talking Heads, Ramones, Blondie, Television, Devo, Pere Ubu, The Heartbreakers, The Dead Kennedys, and assorted Valley Girl groups thrown together by Kim Fowley. Some good bands, but not, in British terms, Punk Bands. Somehow, it was all either too art school, or too flash, sub-Heavy Metal Glam, and, to English youth, too MIDDLECLASS. American kids out of a Steven Spielberg set, (festooned with comicbook posters, robots, Nintendo, TV sets and too much junk food) who stand up at the Prom and shout about hating their Mom and Dad do not inspire sympathy. To most American rebels without a cause (and no idea), English Punk meant Elvis Costello, The Police and Billy Idol. Enough said.

### **LA BOHEME (Little frozen hands painting)**

It becomes clear that living and working in some of the sleazier areas of the Village is seen as being part of the 'sacrifice' young artists expect of themselves. The garret mentality survives here as it does in Hackney, the only difference being that here the offspring of middleclass families pay ridiculous rents so that they can be seen to slum-it with the natives — at least in Hackney a studio among what an EC Housing Commission once called the most deprived inner city area in Western Europe can still be rented at a rate lower than that of central London. In New York's artslum, the rents remain astronomical, and it's not surprising to discover that many of the towns eighty thousand artists are moving across the river to the newly fashionable, but more dangerous Brooklyn.

When you mischievously question the role Culture plays in the suppression of the working class here, eyebrows are raised. This is not

only because America is the most politically conservative Western country outside of South Africa, but, thankfully, because Class is less of an issue here than in Britain. Having said that though it really doesn't appear that there are many kids whose parents are miners or Chrysler workers frequenting the Village coffee bars and galleries of SoHo and NoHo. Earned wealth may at least be a fairer criteria for privilege than inherited Class, but it seems that the Art World in New York is, as usual, the domain of people with money. That being so it seems that the popularity of Art in America has something to do with aspiring towards a 'sophisticated' lifestyle that is, by association, a monied lifestyle. Not that there is anything intrinsically wrong with money, but the almost obsessional pursuit of it here, particularly in the Arts, is not likely to be conducive to the creation of great art. The word "Art" here is the unholy matrimony of Commerce and Culture united by Aspiration. It can also be spelt "A.V.A.R.I.C.E."

One reason why the propagandist element of Art here is so weak is because of this overwhelming feeling of freedom that Americans feel that they have. There is little obvious censorship here, hence little propaganda.

"Without some form of censorship, propaganda in the strict sense of the word is impossible. In order to conduct a propaganda there must be some barrier between the public and the event."

Walter Lippmann, 1922

This sense of freedom is, I imagine, why such third rate activist art and music has such an impact here. American artists get very upset when they're told that they can't hang Old Glory or a crucifix upside-down, because in this city much more important legal abuses of Individual Freedom such as, say, Clause 28, would be impossible. So, let's make do with the Dead Dog scam, the blank canvas, the heavy metal gimmick. Float, float on...

Talking with some young artists here, I can't help but feel them to be a part of the new morality, rather than out there on the edge. The spectre of Aids, the de-glamorisation of narcotics and the general fashionable distrust of '67 and '77 must have something to do with it, but, even allowing for America's remarkably uncritical belief in itself — why so meek? One would have thought, in the urban squalor in New York of all places, that young artists would be searching for new revolutionary lifestyles, not trying simply to revamp the affectations of

old ones. Not simply trying to get rich and famous. One would have thought that they'd be breaking down barriers, asking questions, or — damn it — rioting, but most seem to think that rioting would be a bad career move.

The only riot they've had here for many years was the one in Thompkins Square. (Since writing, they've had another small riot in the Square, in 1991, prompted by homeless tent-dwellers being moved-on by the police). Although pretty small cheese by the standards of Brixton or Belfast or Birmingham City Supporters Club, the riot's influence has been great on the face of the East Village. It's indicative of the attitude that prevails among the right-on arts community here to note that the Thompkins Square disturbances were not led by the self styled 'hard art' hustlers who hang out here, but actually triggered by moves to kick the trendy arts community OUT of the neighbourhood.

Unlike SoHo, which was formerly a commercial district that was opened up for artists by the aforementioned George Maciunas, the East Village was a residential area, and when the artists and galleries moved in, forcing up rents and forcing out the locals, much bad feeling was created. It was in fact an artist — Rainer Fetting — and a supposedly right-on Englishman called Malcolm McLaren who are said to have sparked off much of the hostility when they and other residents of the newly gentrified Christadora apartment block instigated a campaign to get Thompkins Square closed to the homeless bums who frequent the place. We all love the poor, except when they're pissing through our letterbox. Since the disturbances of 1988 and in the face of mounting vandalism and crime, most of the galleries have moved over to Broadway. You get a whole nicer class of bum up there.

At the Museum of Modern Art between Fifth and Sixth Avenue (that should really be called the Museum of Early Modernism), I stare into Dali's brilliant, tiny *Persistence of Memory* and know that is where I want to be, then look at the work of the dreadful Lichtenstein, a purveyor of one good dead horse, and know I want to be somewhere else. The museum is stuffed full of some great art, some famous art, and much junk. There is much quite brazen ineptitude, a great deal of calculated obscurity and once fashionable empty nonsense. At least here in the MOMA one can take photographs, so we pose before a Picasso and push through packs of Nikon-totting fellow culture vultures to get the best shot of a Warhol I would like to hang on my toilet wall, but even the best of the rest pales slightly beside Christian Boltanski's installation — an oblong pile of metallic building blocks or tins, on which stand a row of seven of his famous distorted photographs of

faces, which are spotlit through fine wire mesh. The result is eerie, sad, still. Why Boltanski's installations work and Arnulf Rainer's paintings and photographs of similarly targeted material do not is in their simplicity and lack of presumption. Where Rainer and most abstract artists plead for attention with their quirkiness and smug confrontational methods, Boltanski's installations just seem to sit there solidly. They appear not to have been balanced or painstakingly arranged to the eccentric whims of the artist, they just seem to exist like an old wardrobe full of a dead man's suits. Boltanski suggests sepia photograph albums being leafed through by Jewish grandchildren. "Death," said Boltanski, "occurs every time you take a picture." The Museum of Modern Art is a gallery of death. Dead images, dead artists and past Time which was frozen like a rotting body in a cryonics tank.

When I'm in Greenwich Village chatting, I am looking for Life, and I notice that these earnest young people's eyes light up and hormones veritably bubble when words such as "Loft" and "Studio" are mentioned, and I realise why, despite its disappointments, this town is so fascinating and full of appeal.

It is because everyone here believes themselves to be in a film, and are happy taking on all the characteristics dictated by previously digested, supposedly 'glamorous' media images of this city, this huge floating film set. The image of the reflection. No-one in Manhattan has been born here, they've all come here to be here, in their land of Oz, and everyone is doing that very American thing, aspiring, towards a happy ending before their credits roll. Aren't we all? (This overwhelming sense of ambition and urgency here is why, I think, New York is said by other Americans to be a town full of rude people.) Here though, the aspirations seem almost exclusively towards a normally unobtainable, mythical lifestyle of lofts and apt festivals, fame, infamy, money, boring book launches, private views, scrubbed floorboards and ceilings wallpapered with bakfoil. A painting hung in the MOMA, to show Moma, back in Idaho. Gee look, as famous as the Queen of England. — "Look at me."

Just as happened to popular music in the first half of the '70s, when everyone had 'concepts', gatefold sleeves and gargantuan keyboards, the New York art world seems to the casual observer to be becoming ever more gross and predictable, empty and irrelevant. Let's be honest. Dull. (The longer I'm here, the closer I get to glimpsing America, the more and more I appreciate Andres Serrano's simple exercise in outrage, as just that.)

It dismays me how art so quickly becomes a pastiche of itself. Cut-ups, Jazz, Rock, Hermeticism, once all were esoteric and genuinely subversive. Now cut-ups belong to Jive Bunny, saxophones have long since been usurped by the advertisers of metallic-tasting canned beer, guitars belong to the spoilt brats in the bedrooms of Steven Spielberg movies. The occult makes middle aged bookshop owners richer, hermeticism now being a pastime for the mildly adventurous commuter, bored with Bergman on Channel 4 or PSB. What were once avenues of expression that were as clearly communicative between human beings as African drums, have, through their abuse, become ambient noises with which to fill up the lonely silence of the internal world like so much tinnitus.

Visual art — once the ultimate form of communication — has been slow to realise the speed of the flickering mass unconscious. Because of the artworld's undying respect for itself, it has missed what became obvious to many jazz musicians or writers long ago. An angry young man does not pick up a guitar and play 12 bar blues if he wants to communicate that anger to the world — as he would have done forty years ago — so why does an angry avant-garde activist painter still pander to the schools of Dada or A.E?

Not only do the majority of contemporary artists conform to their mediums history, but many also slavishly follow its fashions. Looking around New York, it seems that size is still in vogue.

As some men with small genitalia are said by psychologists to find an extension in big cars and large attack dogs, small minds seem to compensate with big paintings. But really, in a setting such as this, so controlled by gallery owners, agents, dealers — it's easy to see why so many people are tempted to paint such derivative, gigantic pieces of crap. As the British painter Brigitte Riley once intimated about her own dreadful work, these paintings, like the glass stumps up Fifth Avenue, from the Trump skyscraper to the Forbes building, like New York itself, are not made for people, but for capital.

Nobody owns a wall large enough for these monstrosities unless their name is Getty or Saatchi, Trump or Forbes, or the Nippon Steel Pension Fund, and who wants to paint for poor people anyway? In Mammon, the Money Mountain comes to you — but you've got to paint big enough.

Looking at a lot of these galleries the focus seems to be not on internalisation or transformation, not even on experimentation or expression, but on loudness and advertising. There seems little striving

for love, still less for social utopias. Everybody still wants to be Andy Warhol.

**“BUT THE PEOPLE WERE BEAUTIFUL...”**  
**(Exorcising Europe)**

When I had what I consider to be the pleasure of meeting Warhol briefly in London back in 1979, he did not strike me then as being a man who was remotely interested in anything other than chatting and flirting, which I must admit I found very refreshing. Warhol's art was valid, in the reflective sense, because it was pure New York. Not always by design, but because Warhol was a natural (if not born and bred) native of this city. He didn't have to go to the galleries and copy Pollock — whose work he hated. He just had to advertise himself as being the most important figure in Pop Art, so he was.

Victor Bokris, editor of Warhol's Interview magazine at its height and long-time friend, biographer and confidant of Warhol hints at such to me over coffee and English Muffins (round, dry blobs of something like pastry which nobody in England eats) at a cafe in Midtown.

One of Warhol's most lasting images — the painted money — sprang from a conversation which Warhol had with Interior Designer Muriel Latow in 1960. Warhol was desperate to break-out from his commercial art work and be taken seriously as a fine artist. To do so, he knew he needed to compete, and he felt himself in direct competition with a younger gay couple of painters who had recently surfaced in the New York art world — Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg — and disappointed that the cartoon format he would have excelled at had already been used by Lichtenstein and Rosenquist. He wanted to be famous and respected, but he couldn't think how to go about it. Which does, in itself, imply that Warhol did not wish to be respected because he felt he had anything much to say, but, because he could paint things well, that the respect would come naturally. The *ACTIVITY* of being an artist, and the painting — the *OBJECT* — were enough. “What should we do now?” There were no messages and few ideas. Muriel Latow said she could think of something for him to paint, but it would cost Warhol \$50 for the idea. Warhol paid-up, and the idea of painting Money, Coke bottles, bananas, Campbells Soup cans and other ‘every-day’ objects was born.

The creation of Andy Warhol had begun, and with Andy Warhol, Art departed from classicism, painterly technique, taste, transcend-

ence and (although he could paint very well) expertise. At first, Warhol painted Coke cans with drips, then was told to leave out the arty dribbles and just paint perfect Coke Cans. Not perfect enough to be photo realist, but perfect enough not to be abstract. Just right. So Pop Art, borrowing from Dada and subconsciously commenting on Duchamp's readymades, pushed Abstract Expressionism into the closet. Kline and de Kooning stopped being mentioned at so many parties. Art became a send-up of pure Context and, in an ironic capitalist sneer, BECAME Pure context. But Art became popular again as Art became an idea that people could get behind, because it became something that people could instantly recognise — the stuff of the kitchen sink. Soup cans. Importantly, not REAL soup cans, but painted ones.

What's interesting about Warhol, with his machine-tooled look, his bland photographs and prints and tape recorders and films, is that he illustrated most clearly of all how the simple act of imaging a society became the role of the artist again, as surely as it had been in the days of Leonardo. Off-Register-Reportage was placed in the Art Context, and the images became something else in the culture. Once taken away from mass news media, grafted on to walls, and intellectualised within the tiny confines of the New York Art World, the images became art. Not because Warhol had anything particularly interesting to say about the images or society (except for a few memorable one-liners that were suitably open to interpretation) but because they were given the context necessary. Because they said exactly what artists had been saying for years. Nothing.

In a world mediated not (as many people believe) solely by images, but by words, by catalogues, by interpretations of images, Andy Warhol chose to say nothing. Andy Warhol chose to give people the advice that they always want to hear. Andy Warhol let people believe that their own interpretations were correct. Because, of course, they were. Like Malcom McLaren, Warhol knew his audience, and never did he underestimate their intelligence. Of course, just as when Kenneth Anger had invited you to stare into the chromium of the Harley Davidson, what the audience chose to see in Warhol's mirror, was themselves. The dark gemini twin, demon brother, the Christ replicant sitting over there at the end of the Last Supper table. Take a look at yourself, the first person you look for in a group photograph. That is why Andy Warhol was the most famous artist in the world.

Bockris is talking about Warhol, Burroughs, tapes, paint and glue...

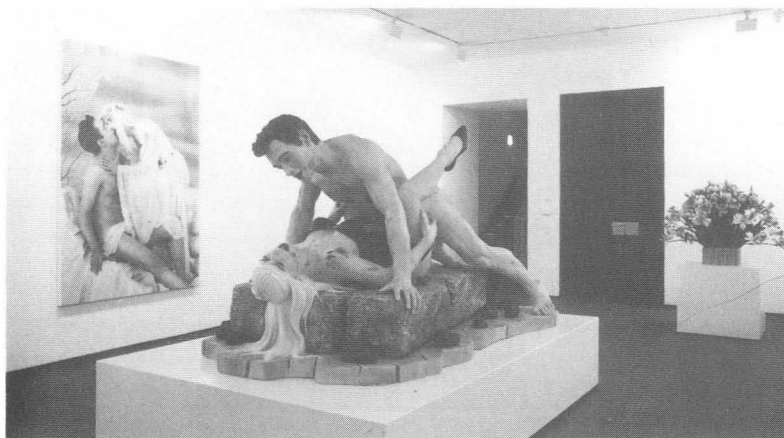


*Quentin Crisp*

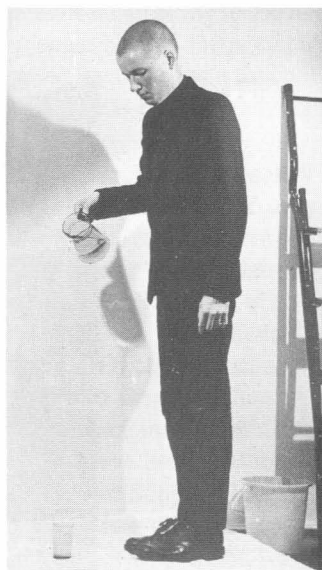


*Andy Warhol, 1964 (Photo: Bob Adelman)*





*Jeff Koons and Cicciolina at work*



*Stewart Home pouring water*

You used to record a great number of conversations — listen in?

"To some extent, my Burroughs book is totally based on that. But not only is it time-consuming to transcribe, it also encourages laziness on the part of the writer. You can be talking with someone and actually stop listening. The tape machine is doing it for you."

I find that the best interviews are ones which you write from memory. You get a more realistic impression.

"Yeah. Once when I was interviewing William Burroughs my tape recorder broke down so I rushed straight home after and wrote the conversation down from memory and I found that the prose was better and I captured the atmosphere of the conversation better."

Inevitable question — did you use cut-ups at all?

"Well, Burroughs introduced me to them. He went through this very interesting period in the late Sixties when he didn't really write much. He was just doing tape recordings of everything, because he had this idea that the camera changed art. Y'know, there was no need to paint a cow anymore when you could take a photo of a cow. So he basically was saying that maybe the tape recorder could change writing the way the camera changed art. You no longer need to write a dialogue, you simply tape a conversation. It didn't really work, though. He didn't get any great work out of it, though I thought it was a courageous experiment. When I first met him in 1974 he asked me first what I was doing, and I told him I did interviews. And he then asked if I'd ever considered cutting up the tapes. He said that I should run two tape recorders, one maybe playing an interview with Warhol and one with Mohammed Ali for example, then get a third tape recorder on 'Record' and randomly record Ali and Warhol, to see what happens. Fascinating idea."

To get to the truth, see what they're REALLY saying. It doesn't really work though.

"No. It's like a collage, some bits are great, but you listen to it a week later and it's really dull. So, to answer your question I did a lot of taping but the only book I got out of it was the Burroughs' biography."

And that taping of everything came from Warhol?

"Yes. I was working with him on *Interview* magazine and we were recording a lot of dinners and people walking in and out and stuff and it was great. Warhol liked it. Actually my Burroughs book came from my taping, but I stopped taping because writing the book on Andy changed things for me."

The Warhol biography you did was more straightforward and literate.

"Yeah. Actually you have the English version which is different than the American one. The American one is shorter, for a less literate audience. Here you have to appeal to the lowest common denominator. You're talking to 100,000 readers of a hardback book, and most of them in America think of Andy as some kind of weirdo. So, you have to give them something readable, easy to understand."

You have written a number of biographies. Is it important to blow the myths surrounding these people? Surely it's tempting to add to them.

"Well, with Andy and Burroughs and Ali and the Velvets etc. I found that all of them had strong images which were in fact blocking the public's understanding of them. For example with Burroughs, people thought him a very cold, heavy metal, scientific, mysterious guy with no sense of humour, which is the complete opposite as Burroughs is very funny, a very sweet man. So, I thought if I could get a sense of that humour across his work would be more available to you. *Naked Lunch* is a hilarious book. I just wanted to bring to the public the real persona of the artist so that they could see, not be scared off by the distant image."

And the same is true of Warhol?

"If not more so. There's a great poignance in understanding Andy if you understand what he went through to get to the point of giving you that work. Jesus Christ this is a deeply muted guy coming out of enormous involvement with the fear of death and vulnerability..."

Did your view of him change during the five years it took you to write the book?

"It always does. It's bound to really. With Andy, I already knew him very well, but by the time I got deeply into it I began to really admire him even more because I realised what he had gone through to get where he was, which I didn't know when I began. And also I saw how he had maintained his sense of humour and his humanness through all this intense conflict within his childhood in the Fifties, with people rejecting him all the time. And I saw that he was a really great man. Very brave and strong. It would have turned a lot of people very sour."

He didn't live to see the book.

"No. A great shame. I have had a number of shocks in my life but the most shocking was when Andy died. We had all expected him to live. He was such a strong character."

How did you get access to that world of The Factory? New York must have been interesting then.

"Yeah, it was fascinating then. I was just lucky. I came over from Brighton and worked in Philadelphia, then moved to New York in the early Seventies and got a job working for Andy, I was twenty two. It was just getting into that period when New York was the cultural capital of the world. Up until about 1986 it was the centre of the art world, literary world and so on. Many people were here so we took advantage and took on the attitude that we're just going to go out and talk to all these people and learn a lot and see what's going on. Which we did. We did about ninety interviews in the magazine between '70 and '75 with fascinating people. Our idea was to figure out what they were doing and how they were doing it, so we could do it ourselves. I got to know Burroughs and Lou Reed and Andy and so on, but it took a long time to really get to know them as they are famous people, and they are suspicious of people for a long time. I was lucky because it was an incredible time to be living here. New York peaked between about '77 and '80. It was a fantastic time."

New York still seems to the Englishman incredibly open to ideas in the arts and so on. Has that gone downhill now?

"Yeah, completely."

In terms of the quality of work being done, the lack of new ideas, the climate?

"In terms of everything."

Because people have come here to emulate the past?

"No, not really. Because Aids has had an enormous, very damaging effect on the New York art world. The majority of better artists, dancers, painters, writers, actors, directors, are gay, and gays have been affected more than any other group. A lot of them have died or moved away. Also economic circumstances, social circumstances helped to change the landscape here. I think it really ended about '86. The first half of the Eighties were really actually quite exciting. There was a lively, vibrant art scene with Jean Basquait, Keith Haring, Warhol and so on. Now Jean is dead, Andy is dead, Keith Haring has Aids (he has since died). It's all gone. That can't help be felt. It's terrible.... The lifestyle, the whole involvements people had here have changed radically. Same with the drug scene. It's no longer hip or interesting, no longer experimental. It was interesting in 1977, very wild and vibrant. A lot of experimental thinking and living going on which was valid in the sense that it did lead to things. Creativity, interesting relationships

and conversations and experiences. With the advent of Aids, it stopped. People are not going out and staying up for three days and taking drugs. That lifestyle was valid in that you did meet people who you ended up working with, having love affairs with, travelling with, conversing with. It wasn't bullshit as people now tend to think, it was REAL. It just isn't the case anymore."

There is an atmosphere of death here. The 'Easter Parade'.

"New York is still a very interesting landscape. There is a great book to be written about what is going on here, because it is interesting. We are living in a landscape of death, it is like the plague in London in 1740 or whenever. Of course there is still a lot going on here in terms of work and connections and people, but it's taken on a very black, very negative aura. And, as such, is interesting."

That atmosphere has shown up in a lot of the work being produced now. Like Lou Reed's.

"Yeah. I haven't had much contact with Lou on a personal level for a while. I saw him with John Cale doing his songs about Andy. It was great... He was another one of those people who was a great teacher in a way. He had a lot of experience. Again, unlike his image, he is a very sweet person, very intelligent, literate, who loves conversation and discussion. I admire him very much."

His work now is better than anything he's done since Berlin.

"Yeah, terrific. Lou Reed is a great man. Just like Andy, he survived for a very long time with a great deal of conflict and difficulties and he's come out of it well."

He came up with some great writing under that pressure, and through drugs. I talk to young musicians and painters here now and they seem often to be a bit too clean living, and for obvious reasons. But they also seem very reactionary now.

"Yeah, it's very dull. Drugs are really *verböten* today, but it's interesting to look back over the last thirty years and see how much great work was produced on drugs. Burroughs always used to argue with me and say that it's not produced under the influence of drugs, but that a person who has this experimentalism in him uses drugs. Amphetamines produced the majority of the great work here in the Sixties... Dylan, Warhol, The Living Theatre. People worked their asses off under them, they followed their visions to the end of the rainbow and they got them. Now, as you say, young kids are different about that. In New York it began to happen in '83. The yuppies, a very reactionary group, took over. It was a drag to see the influence and position they

had, but I think it faded away because there was no soul to it, just a mechanistic productivity, no depth. No understanding of life and what it's all about or what we're doing here."

I think there is a return to those values in art to a degree.

"Yeah. I think we are going to see a re-birth of a deeper kind of commitment and understand of our involvement with life and art and the relation between them. It just happens that we need to clear out of our minds what has gone before us and come up with some new vision. And that new vision is not going to come out of this lily white, purer than-thou mass of people who are grabbing on to the religious myth, the capitalist myth. Experimentalism has to come back, and will do. Like Lou Reed says in *Heroin* — 'I'm gonna try for the kingdom, if I can.' This is what we've got to do, TRY for the kingdom of seeking."

That's why I prefer writing factually rather than fiction. People are interesting, fact is interesting, people are interesting enough.

"Yeah, exactly. I have always been interested in and written about real people I though were great seekers, great pioneers. Warhol, Burroughs, Reed were real pioneers. And being a pioneer is always tough. They are killed and die in the search. They overdose, they get Aids, they commit suicide. That will always be the case...."

Bockris had the good fortune to live through a vital time in this city's cultural life, and documented it better than probably any other writer. Now, though, New York seems dead. The last remnants of Yuppiedom and the children of burn-again christians litter the art and music world. Warhol, who on one level can be seen as an artist who encouraged the 'soul-less' art of the Eighties, can, with words, also be seen as being the ultimate pioneer of meaningful art in the Sixties. Trouble is, you have to read books by the likes of Victor Bockris to work that out.

Perhaps ironically, Warhol's interest in mass produced images in the Sixties had some influence on the Eighties Yuppie obsession with Design. 'Well designed' objects — the stupid, heavy Filofax, the telephone that falls off the table every time you pick it up, horrible Memphis chairs et al — became important signals of style and taste.

The crock of dross that lying tells you that if you wear something, or listen to something, you are a tasteful person, was shovelled beyond belief during the '80s. If the '50s will be remembered as a Haircut, the Sixties a T-shirt, the Seventies a Safety Pin, then the Eighties must be remembered as Rennie MacIntosh's ridiculous chair (which was, of course, designed in the '20s). In the Eighties William

Morris became a name to discuss at the type of parties where people once discussed the Brontë's or Solzinechin (the type of parties you get out of quick). Horrible men with Next mailorder suits and stupid round glasses were everywhere.

As a 19th Century wallpaper designer and, to use the local vernacular, general all-round smartarse, Morris' career has some parallels with that of Warhol. Interestingly, though, Morris and his Art Worker's Guild — which worked alongside the painters New English Arts Club — was opposed to the exclusivity of the Arts as epitomised by the likes of the all-powerful, completely awful Royal Academy. On the bottom line, Warhol was not. Morris did much to bring art to a larger, more aesthetically aware public, but he must also carry the soup can for being the founding father of the Arts & Craft movement, and an inspiration for such atrocities as Laura Ashley's scrubbed pine and Terence Conran's Habitat. He was also a tediously well behaved, socially minded Christian, even though some have identified him as being an integral link in the assumed chain connecting Winstanley, Coppe, De Sade, Fourier, Lautreamont, Alfred Jarry, Aleister Crowley, Huelsenbeck, Tzara, Leary, Maciunas, DeBord, LaVey, McLaren and P-Orridge.

Strangely, through the Eighties Design came to be seen as being the same as 'Art', even though there is a fundamental difference. Artists are egomaniacs who produce work in a world of their own, or, at least, pretend to by promulgating the art cult's pretension and unintelligibility. Designs can, on the other hand, only work by directly accommodating the needs of their users. Design only became bad when it became dictatorial, when Form departed almost entirely from Function amid the self congratulatory back-slapping of Fitch, Sudyic and the C.S.D. Phones that fell off tables weren't just phones, they were frustrated pieces of art created by designers who wanted to be taken seriously. People who wanted to leave the draughtsman's Drawing Office and move into a 'Studio'. Leave the smut of commercial, functional, 'working class' craftsmanship and join the scrubbed-clean, useless expressionists of the 'middle class'. And middle-class artists were dilittante, individualistic and eccentric weren't they? Hence the spotty bowtie boom.

Walter Benjamin was the first to suggest that the mechanical reproduction of images and objects took away the privileged position of the original. This is true in the area of mass produced Design but, even post-Pop Art, manifestly untrue in the case of Fine Art where, in the Museum of Vacume — the MCA or MOMA — art objects are still placed literally and metaphorically on a pedestal.

Designs, on the other hand, are intergrated into the everyday life of the user. Despite what Fluxxus said, Beuys' fat, or Yoko's blood, or Andy Warhol's LIMITED EDITION prints are still viewed through glass screens and display cases, enjoying a degree of exclusivity that, unlike Design objects, is controlled by the artist and the dealers. Hardly the stuff of revolutions outside or even inside the refined world of art. Again, I feel cynical and grumpy, let down by Art's promises in the museum/gallery, however neo-Bauhaus the wrapping, however perfect the floorboards. And I can understand, but only wince, at Designers' wishes to be put into the Cultural context of fine art, the pseudo Science, because it is there that I find retrogression and boredom. The sign on the museum's wall says "DO NOT TOUCH THE EXHIBITS", but could just as well read "DO NOT BE TOUCHED". Here in New York, I have lost my last shred of hope. Is that blood...blood on the floor? Can the world be as ...

I should cheer up. Perhaps, like people who sit and watch American football, I just have no sensitivity or taste.

'Good taste', the last refuge of the witless, is more blurred in New York than London. Filofaxes don't exist here and cell phones are very rare because, unlike in Britain, payphones are numerous and actually work. But Manhattan is still peopled by strange men who wear large spectacles and unpleasant bowties. In London such people would be Interior Designers, TV producers, or Advertising Execs. In New York they are Psychoanalysts or Publishers.

Currently, three of the most famous artists in New York are Jean Michel Basquait who, although only 'discovered' in 1981 quickly became a millionaire, Keith Haring, and Jeff Koons. Jean was young, painfully hip, and boring as hell. A former street graffiti artist, he went on to paint in places he was told to paint, and produced colourful, trivial pieces of junk bought by colourful, trivial people who had heavy money to invest and thought Jean 'a real character'. The type of young, brown-skinned guy they would avoid on the subway, if, indeed, they ever got on the subway. Basquait was typical of 1980s artworld whizzkid, and typical of New York. The graffiti has been cleaned off the subways, where it livened things up, and put on the walls, where it clutters things up.

Keith Haring rocketed to New York from Kultztown, PA., as the artworld's sanitised representation, alongside Basquait, of street subculture. His little dancing men are actually quite stunning when



viewed 'in the flesh' at Leo Castelli's gallery in SoHo, but to compare Haring to Warhol in terms of artistic influence is rather silly.

Both men shared a difficult sexual nature and a love of fame and other nightclubbing celebrities that did little to aid their health. Haring, once enamoured with New York's sleazier clubland and subways, became a friend of Princes Caroline of Monaco, William Burroughs, Yoko Ono, Timothy Leary and, of course, Warhol himself. Haring took on legendary status, particularly in the gay bars of Stonewall and Gay Street in the West Village, when he died of an Aids-related disease. A victim of nothing more than sexual pleasure, and love. Although Haring and Basquiat can, if one wishes, be seen poignantly as victims, dragged from the street into the galleries of Tony Shafrazi and Castelli and used, they were hardly as unfortunate as the beggars one finds lying outside these same galleries sporting signs that proclaim that they are HIV positive and homeless. Nor were they, because of their personal histories, great artists.

Jeff Koons is way better. In a city of yuppies, he is, in fact, the natural successor to Andy Warhol.

### **THE PERFECT MOMENT — I Buy, Therefore I Am**

Jeff Koons arrived in New York from art college in Chicago in '76. He got a job up at M.O.M.A. selling memberships to businessmen over the 'phone. In '79, he twigged that the main art form in New York City was really what Donald Trump called The Art Of The Deal, and using his selling skills learned at the Museum of Modern Art, he got a job trading commodities on Wall Street and became very rich. Koons still nurtured artistic pretensions though, and soon started using his money to buy and assemble materials for use in his own sculptural designs. His materials involved stuff like Hoovers, inflatable bunny rabbits, plastic flowers and basket balls. Objects that were immediately identifiable as being appropriated from 'Real Life'. Like most contemporary artists nowadays, Koons, you see, knew that all that mattered was CONTEXT. And, in a New York artworld in-joke, loudness and advertising skills. Koons flagrantly says 'Buy Me' and you'll feel better, because then you'll be in on the joke.

Art is also good PR for rich men and cash rich companies. This has been true since the Renaissance, when the Florentine Medici family, who were really just an unpopular bunch of money lenders, immortalised themselves by commissioning the likes of Michaelangelo

to decorate churches, ostensibly for God and the People. Art is a good way for the robber barons to clean up their act.

Koons is so up-front about the banality of it all he is detested by most critics. I think Koons' suggestion — not a new one — seems to be that the conceptually-placed object, the situation, becomes more 'real' than the original 'real' object, simply because it is viewed and thought about differently. Contemporary visual art seems chained to the ball of defamiliarisation. The world turns and reveals nothing new. Koons' ideas are somewhat Situationist. Or, perhaps, very Warhol-esque.

Situationist writer Guy DeBord's *detournement* intellectualised a re-appropriation of 'reality' as subversion. Any sign, symbol, street, billboard, painting, book, any representation of society's contented idea of reality, could be converted into something else, even its opposite. The situationist idea of society being a 'spectacle', a counterfeit experience of real life perceived only through images, adverts, icons, of capitalism and technology that leave the viewer — the individual — feeling powerless, meant that the re-appropriation of those images, that language, could alter not only the images, but the wider perception of reality itself. And that, if it works, is interesting, worthwhile, and also subversive.

But the problem faced by the situationist is the old one. The currency remains only that. A cross, a dollar bill, a Satanic inversion or a Digger's empty pocket. And, as Mark Downham argued, if the Spectacle exists as a model at all, then it is permanently re-sequencing itself to accommodate change and challenges, which is another way of questioning the validity of such conceptual — or contextual — art, be it from Koons or Serrano.

Such art is theoretical more than visual because, using the sensory apparatus humans are endowed with obviously makes one perceive reality in terms of such things as adverts, because if you are looking at an advert you are experiencing a facet of 'reality' as surely as if you are a neanderthal man eating a deer. An advert is not ONLY a representation of reality (a reflection of the product), but IS a part of reality as well. So the question is not simply one involving 'reality' at all. The question is one of whose version of reality is truthful. We now know, though, that no version of reality is the truthful one. Because as far as reality goes, there is no finite truth. Only half truths, virtual realities. As History, Hitler, and Philip K Dick have shown, truth is a shifting adjective. The Last Supper set in the Hollywood Wax Museum was physically real, but

was viewing it 'the most thrilling experience of your life'? Did it represent anything of value? The current artistic obsession seems to be semiological, but conveniently free from definitions.

So all we have to do is invent our own definitions, choose who to believe. Observe, investigate, accept, reject, edit. Artists should be aware of this, and capable of questioning the MOTIVES that are behind one definition of reality or another. If people believe in Cecil B. de Mille's Christ, or Walt Disney's punchable cabbagepatch kids, or the Coke generation, then perhaps they should have their motives, and the motives of Hollywood or Advertisers or Priests brought into question. Perhaps they should be encouraged not to accept all this junk. (The distorting witches mirror of good art again, showing the viewer something of himself that may not be as straightforward as it had seemed.)

But by the same token, perhaps artists, who enjoy their self appointed position of influence, should also be encouraged to question their own motives, their own supposedly smart appropriation of images, their own junk. If they did so seriously, my own opinion is that many would realise the circular nature of the game. They too are only advertising. They too are suggesting that their version of life, the art disneyland, is somehow more enlightened, correct or, at least, more preferable. But when Beuys covered a room in felt, (one of his fetishes) nobody outside the world of high art could give a damn, unless of course he explained his history and motives — in which case they made perfect sense.

As usual, even though Situationism and much more 20th century Art claims to be radical, communicative, social and political, the basic motivating theory seems to be rooted in the idea that there are (or, God, life can't be this simple, so there MUST be) some vague 'feelings' or answers lodged silently in some unexplored nodule of right brain cells that mere words cannot define or express. So the artist, being 'scientific' again, pokes around and expresses himself — his 'alienated', 'gifted' vision of reality — through images that have been plucked from their position in the Spectacle and plonked behind glass. Then, ironically, they are described with words — the same words that cannot express feelings from the dark organic swamplands of the right brain. (A fashionable set of words currently used to excuse the artists self indulgences are provided by Shamanism. The delving into a 'shamanic conscious' in order to 'discover' or 'touch' some suitably obscure past consciousness has provided a reason for art which is solophistic that is suitably distanced and alien to the spiritually vacant Western way of life. In fact, much of the language and attitudes displayed by artists who

have conformed to this currently fashionable form of atavistic resurgence would seem to indicate a total disregard for the cultural integrity of the American Indian and Eskimo histories from which they have plundered.)

Everything is reduced back down to words. The hard bones that give shape and definition, the bones that lie at the bottom of the thick organic soup when it is reduced. There is no escape from linear History along this dead end if the artist chooses to remain merely an inverter or re-arranger of dead images. The advertisers of one version of reality, at the expense of another. What we need is not the stylised confrontation of decaying ideas, but the next step, the synthesis of worthwhile visions.

"My son, behold these hands and feet." Artists should be the living exemplar of those words of the philosopher: "vital essences, volatiles, indifferent, drinkers at the sacred font... Uncontainable in any social framework, of that tribe that New York reforms and banishes to Paris." "A house in Connecticut with trees and a garden. A summer place in Martha's Vineyard. Cars. A boat. Yeah...

But he would be functioning on the Corporate level now...

The thought was frightening."

Sasoon/Cocteau/Selby

Synthesis is born from conflict. It is the next stage on the evolutionary scale. Our social and scientific advances have all been created initially by the resonance of conflict, the right to argue and discuss. But too often, contemporary art is guilty of only creating the false, external appearance of conflict, a manufactured illusion of progress. The conflict created by *Piss Christ* or the inversion of the American Flag causes not even a blip on the evolutionary social scale. Such choice of battlegrounds is, as I have said, inadvertently supportive of the dictated battle lines drawn by those in power.

The image of 20th Century Art is one of a snake. Not one which prompts children to eat an apple, look up a skirt, or discover anything of much importance, but a snake which is curled into a circle, forever eating itself. Eternal, diminishing, returns. Going nowhere, in that reptilian way, the more it eats, the bigger it grows and the easier it is to eat more of itself. In this sense, the Art World is not an evolutionary tool for the discovery of a new perception, but the purveyor of an endless stream of images of this (false) version of reality. The mechanism of a false consciousness that David Hockney mistook for a more accurate reality. As a mirror of the consumerist 20th Century, perhaps

it should be, and given this, its role as a mirror rather than a hammer, the visual artists of the century have done their job of supporting the structure of society as well as Leonardo da Vinci did in the 17th century. Old icons and new diseases.

As such, the artist — Koons — is the buyer/editor/salesman of Reality, reality being, in media artists' eyes, just the media itself. Reality being what you see in the Museum. The concepts are identical in the 'Fine Arts' and Entertainment as well as in Advertising. New York is one huge shopping mall. The ethnic bric-a-brac shops sell voodoo masks, Janean heads, Buddhas, 'ethnic' looking rugs and boxes so the shopper can acquire the Look, the accoutrements of this or that alien culture, and that's all. No word of the history or religion or identity of the culture being plundered — just the crusaders haul of booty.

Everything reduced down to Interior Designers spacejunk. The reality of the Wax Museum. Hell, not a real church, not Christ, no, but a representation of a representation of Christ. A COMMENT on the representation of reality. I see. Here it is. Get behind this observation, that comment, kiss feet and... throw money. Reality is presented as a series of distanced images, life is experienced in a hall of mirrors, reality perceived merely as a succession of reflections of reflections, adverts, wax dummies, slogans, sliding off without meaning into the infinity of the glass case, the polished marble, the vanishing point of *The Flagellation*, the most beautifully varnished, perfect gallery or airport lounge...

I've been getting desperate, and in the absence of any new ideas and genuinely thought-provoking art here, (that is, art that provokes new thoughts, not just awakens old ones), I like Koons.

Koons is a collaborator, but also an agent provocateur. He is a contributor to the pile of junk that was '80s art and cultural consumerism, but also the purveyor of the idea that points to such art as being junk. Important as commodity, but not important as part of a culture that asks itself questions, because it seems unable to say anything anymore. Like the pulp novellas in airport lounges, it's Space Junk which you buy to prove to yourself you are free, junk which you use to fill time and space.

Koons may be asking the viewer to re-examine that reality in the finest traditions of worthy art, by being a reflector of society, and by breaking the mirrors, even though he is using old ideas, techniques and images. (Indeed, much of his work even looks like something Luis Jimenez was doing in the early Seventies.) Koons shuns artistic technique and embraces technology, as he realises that the contemporary

art world — the clinging obsession with scholarly technique — is unnecessary, and that the true artist must have a dialogue with the media of his age, as it is largely the media that defines reality. In incorporating an idea of mass production, he is of course offering no escapism, just the illusion that some objects and ideas will be better understood and more personalised if viewed within the perfect frame and made, literally, more demanding by virtue of their context and their cost.

Currently, most of Koons' banal work is untouched by the artist's own hand. Everything is made for him by craftsmen to his design specifications. Although this caused some outrage in the art world, again it's nothing new. Ronald Jones, Gretchen Bender, the Harrisons, Bill Woodrow, Imi Knoebel, John Armleder, Barbara Kruger and many others since the early Seventies have been producing essentially post expressionist activist art that has been largely untouched by painterly digit. And even Leonardo had assistants and technicians to help him paint the boring bits. Koons is just the most timely and successful example of the artist who has ridden himself of some of the arty mystique of 'individual' expression. Not because he does not express himself in a way that is a direct result of his own life (his work is personal), but because what he expresses is something to do with a problem that faces everybody all the time.

We are of course still using the old language of this century's art, that created by the anti-art of Marcel Duchamp. His ready-made objects, (a bikewheel, shovel, urinal, etc.) started the ball rolling in that they were a comment on the art world, and Koons is merely updating an old tradition. Given the fact that, as I have said, there seems to be no truly avant-garde art in America, I enjoy Koons' work. Even if his only true skill is to irritate art bores.

Koons appears to make little fuss about the obvious sociological content of his work, preferring to smile and sloganise. His uses of mass produced bunny rabbits alongside Baccarat crystal sets, billboard posters, and expensive, reflective surfaces will no doubt suggest a world of innuendo relating to consumerism, attainment and class to those viewers who are that way inclined. Viewed here in New York, amid the art students, winos, billboards, Trump stumps and deadends, it seems to make perfect sense, and is very funny. The codes are almost dispensed-with, the reactions immediate. Koons is not particularly clever, not sensitive, but he is at least observant, opportunist, and arch. Rewind to the miserable, hung-over tourist in Chicago — "As surely as you laugh when a joke is funny, some images just go Thud... Just look."

Like much minimal art, Koons' work is impersonalised by virtue of the fact that it is fabricated, distanced, designed. In this respect, in his time (the '80s), it had to be, because the issues it raises are of concern to Society as a whole, rather than the Individual. We're heavily into community 80's buzzwords with Koons, not least 'Design', 'Media', 'Fashion', 'Advertising' and 'Consumerism'. And why not? The difference between good and bad art of this genre has always been one of convincing the viewer that the object placed before them is significant and symbolic. It is simply a matter of subtlety, social understanding and personal taste. Koons' art works, for me, in a way that no other art I've seen on this trip because although its influences are still marginalised by their art world context, they are increased because they ARE banal, irreverent, relevant, and (no Hoover pun intended) vacuous. The everyday objects do not become more 'special', they just get put in a display case, as in a shop. Cute.

Once, painters concerned themselves with depicting a dictated vision of reality — religious icons and portraits, and representational images of everyday reality — rustic scenes relevant to their largely agrarian audience. In this century, they've obviously been more concerned with manufactured things — adverts and images such as flags, wrecked cars, electric chairs or soup cans. Images were appropriated (rather than created) from the 'real' world of the urbanite. As though the reality of the world (a world experienced largely through images that have had their meaning, use and importance supplied and controlled by politicians, priests, cameramen and corporations) could be personalised and controlled by their 'misuse'. Even art itself could be made more personal through its abuse.

Throughout this century, Westerners have yearned for the possession of objects which fill the space left by our distance from the supposedly more 'real', more 'physical' world of rural life. People also crave images and objects as a substitute for the spiritual fulfilment that many post Christians feel. Artists have therefore concerned themselves with depicting a dictated version of reality again, only this time, as irony. *Piss Christ* questions the church and the pseudo Christian values of the West's governments. Soup Cans question — or, more likely, parody — the reality mediated by advertisers. Koons' appropriation continues the tradition and is a quite logical way of reflecting this 20th century attempt by the Western Urbanite (particularly in America) to 'arrive' at a state of grace in the culture by the simple aspiration towards, and attainment of new physical objects — products. The art pieces themselves, which incorporate mass produced objects, are also

products in their own right. As products, they also say more about you than any car or airline ticket or seat at the opera, as they are heavily soaked in irony.

You, the buyer, have supposedly taken back some control by ascribing something to the object that was not originally intended by the manufacturers, and which many people cannot see. (It is similar to the stylists double-bluff that says '50s kitsch, or Victorian enamel adverts, are trendy and artistically valuable.) And to appreciate irony, to appreciate most art, you must have already attained a certain (somehow superior) kind of place in the culture. You must understand where you're at.

America is the ideal setting for Koons, as the reason that 'Art' is so popular here as something to aspire to understand and own, and the reason that it is comparatively unimportant in philistine England, is because Art is something identified with an education. And in a stratified class system, education suggests Class.

In England, no matter how much one can buy and consume, one cannot buy into 'class' without fear of being labelled *nouveau riche* and, therefore, classless. (In a highly class conscious society, being classless is being outcast.) These people that do buy into class, by becoming educated and being interested in cultural pursuits, are perhaps in England called Yuppies, or worse. We are dragged inevitably into the Politics of Envy, the realm of scratched limos. But the phenomenon of aspiring to a supposedly universally available social position is the essence of America. The ability to accept the material rewards of work and the subsequent ability to move socially, the ability to buy cultural kudos, is therefore more socially acceptable here, hence the greater 'appreciation' of art. Unless your name is Saatchi, the attainment of art in England is usually in keeping with a class related tradition. The attainment of art in America is an unselfconscious sign of arrival.

With the acquisition of Art, it's all been worth it. Your money, smouldering away against your soul in its search for fulfilment, in its search for Space and Time, has finally arrived with you. You both are one, in Art.

In using the most common, ordinary commodities, rather than the most esoteric codes (as Pollock did) or extreme juxtapositions (as Serrano did), Koons is raising questions to be mulled-over more by men in the street than by Congressmen and Critics. A hustler like McLaren, he has chosen his symbols and his audience well. An audience that does not have the luxury of escaping from art, but prefers to escape into art.



The art of everyday life as experienced by everybody. The universe in the mind of man re-invented in the mind that has had its perception of objects, of life, of reality, tugged-at.

Koons most famous work is probably *One Ball Total Equilibrium Tank*, which consists of a basketball floated in a plexiglass tank filled with what looks like water. (Though if it was water, I can't see how he got it not to float to the top.) Less emotive than *Piss Christ*, the image is equally beautiful and strange. And, after all, Reality as mediated by technological processes is incomplete without the static ball, the slow-motion playback, the invited commentary or analysis that is academia's service industry. Its role in the world. The still ball is an invitation to the catalogue-writer, the art critic, the expert, the bespectacled postmodernist who Roland Barthe's pointed out would supply the text. The viewer. Koons raises the importance of the audience by effectively democratising art and levelling historical assumptions, and annoys artbores all in one fell swoop, while also following Warhol and Beuys in creating for himself a Persona and a healthy bank balance. As I said, Yuppie art.

In truth, Koons has about as much to do with radical changes in perception as Italian soft porn model Ciccionlina has to do with party politics. No surprise to find that Koons is making a film with the 'Pin Up' Italian MP. *Made in Heaven* is to be released as the first major art movie of the Nineties. A snigger appears on the face of the white ceramic Michael Jackson statuette. The Pink Panther wiggles between the breasts of the strawberry blonde bimbo. Very clever. I like jokes. Koons took art out of Warhol's supermarket or kitchen, and put it on the TV. Art is only fifty years behind writing.

Koons became famous because, like Warhol, he was in the right place at the right time, and, like the 3-D expressionist he really is, he left the explanation absent from the package. In 1986 he was taken-in by all powerful New York dealer Illenna Sonnabend (of Rauschenberg and Gilbert & George fame). Like Wall Street-wise Koons, she knew the score.

It was Sonnabend, not Donald Trump, who said "I take artists when they are young and cheap and make them famous and expensive." The Dealers are the deities of New York, no matter how uncouth. To borrow from Oscar Wilde — they know the price of everything and the value of nothing. Dealing commodities, movements, issues, junk, like so much detergent. Screens flicker, brokers panic. "Neo-geo down 25 points Illy baby!" "Shit. Sell now, go out and drag some kid off an

elevator and tell him to go and express himself using his blood in a lift shaft. Call it neo-plasma-concept-somethingorother, and throw in that fuckin' dead dog while you're at it." The New York art world, like the architecture, is pure capitalism at its most obscene and perfect. A piece of canvas can go from being worthless to being worth \$15 million in ten years — how can you lose out with so much money clinging to so many brainless suits out there? The dealer Ivan Karp, one of the old men of the scene, can't believe his luck, having dealt Warhol, Koons and Johns since the late Fifties. In November of 1988, Jasper Johns' *False Start*, which was sold by Johns for \$3,000 when it was painted, reached \$15,500,000 at auction.

One of the newer dealers here is Larry Gagosian, a partner of Warhol's old agent Leo Castelli. Gagosian is the perfect example of 1980s' art in America. He started in a poster shop in Westwood, L.A., where he picked-up one of Joseph Beuy's old suits. Partly as a joke, he hung it in his shop window and priced it at \$1,000. It sold, and he knew he was on to a good thing. Now he joins the ranks of part time Financiers (15 'round the table), part time art dealer/collectors like Asher Edelman as one of the super rich men in Manhattan. The price of something is what one person will pay. Isn't Art wonderful?

After his first Sonnabend-backed exhibition, a large chunk of Koons' work was heading to London, having been snapped-up — not ironically — by the Saatchis. Koons kept his mouth shut and walked away with \$5 million. Post Yuppiedom, Koons' value on the market has slumped. Have a nice day.

It seems to me that the language of art is one of silence. What once was supposedly an activity that gave vent to feelings that must otherwise forever remain muted in the conventional linear expressions of words, has disappeared, like New York... into itself. Vanished into the blank canvas of academe, the black stares of spotty youths in 'existential' polonecks and the vaults of the japanese banks. Described only by the old language, the rival, the enemy, the lover. Words.

The language of Art was destroyed by Duchamp. The subsequent search for a new language — something which should have been an exciting adventure into the discovery of what Austin Spare called the 'Alphabet of Desire' — has caused much confusion and pretence. Much alienation and, for some, much money. Now it is time for the search to end, the art world to be destroyed and then re-created, using a new language.

Instead of the continuous, shallow use of everyday junk (if I see another piece of rotten wood and a TV set placed Just So on a gallery floor I'll throw up), the yelping political heckle, the tiresome fashion for obscurity — all of which have been absorbed in the culture — I would like to see artists do what writers have almost always done. That is, make art that is useful and relevant. More artists should forget about trying to make pointed comments about the art world and obvious, outdated statements about flags and politics. They may consider ceasing to regurgitate and juxtapose images of reality, in the hope of it generating a 'third mind' vision of a new reality that they dictate to their audience, and go back to touching and reporting their own reality (assuming that through the pretentious art psycho babble that they perceive any reality as such). Draw from their own experience, their own life, and not concentrate on the mass media and other people's lives.

Regardless of theories, real people still exist. They are born, they have sex, they fight, they dream, they cry, they die. Upon such real focal points our Humanity rests, and our personal observations and feelings experienced at such points often lead to resonant art. Art which really can express feelings that words alone cannot.

When a man sat in a cave, eating his deer, words and paintings were one and the same thing. A real form of communication (telling people how to hunt and survive). Like writing, the theatre and cinema, painting must once more take on this role of communicating human thoughts and feelings, based on human experience.

Upon such foundations great art can be made. Art which need not be explained away with words. Art which speaks a new language of its own. Art which breaks away from the language of Control. ("In the beginning was the word, and the word was God." So remove the word, remove God from the equation entirely for a moment, leaving LaVey alone with his church organ and Serrano paddling in his own piss.) A visual language that is as emotive as music and as accurate as the written and spoken word.

Imagine it.

Such visions would return art to its original functional definition. As William Burroughs is continually pointing out, visual artefacts and artistic activities were formulae intended to create very specific results. Magick was not an end in itself but the means to an end, like bio chemistry is a means. Art, then, should not be an end in itself. That need not mean, as many people think, that if art is not for its own sake,

then it must be utilitarian. It means simply that Art should make things happen, in the same way that a magickal action can make something happen, or a Biochemist can create a virus and make people die, or give re-birth to a clone.

One can pick up a basketball and float it in a tank of water and it is no longer any use as a basketball. One can float Christ in urine and people still worship him. In fact, they worship him with more vehement intolerance than ever before. One piece has no specific effect, besides making a ball not work as a ball any longer, the other piece has an effect that must surely have been unintentional (distancing art still further from the majority of people while at the same time strengthening the grip christians and censors have on the definition of Life). Serrano's intentions may have been excellent but, like those of LaVey, the intentions led to bad magick through lack of foresight and awareness.

Perhaps more artists should talk to people. Sitting in a bar talking with people who drink to forget is a better way of getting to understand the world than sitting in the Museum of Modern Art and pontificating.

Waiting in the International Style, the airport or gallery, for something that never happens, never lands.

A man gets out of a plane. He is shot before he kisses the tarmac. Acquino eats a dog, Tolsen beats Lassie, Sniffy the rat escapes Rick Gibson's crusher only to be eaten by a snake and, next to the empty seat in Economy Class, a girl listens to *Madame Butterfly* on her Walkman.

"From out of the crowded city,  
there is coming a man —  
a little speck in the distance,  
climbing the hillock.  
Can you guess who it is?"  
"Tutto questo avvera, te lo prometto.  
Tienti la tua paura, —  
io con sicura fede l'aspetto..."

## CULT-JUNK (Smile, and Show Me Your False Teeth)

So junk becomes Spacejunk, transmuted from something to be buried and forgotten, to something that symbolises a hands-on control of mass

reality. Post post modernism, another invention from the pages of an Eighties style bible, becomes pre traditionalism as the cultural pendulum swings once more towards the final cult of the empirical avant-garde — Capitalism.

Contemporary artists race towards the shadow of Haussmann. The 'reactionary' creed of Capitalism — the Action that causes the Marx Artists reaction — can, in some strange lights be seen as an extraordinary futuristic, anarchic structure.

As Gerald Graff put it — "advanced capitalism needs to destroy all vestiges of tradition, all orthodox ideologies, all continuous and stable forms of reality in order to stimulate higher levels of consumption." Graff was, of course, wrong, as in fact Capitalism needed to retain orthodox ideologies (of hierarchy) in order to survive. The point is, however, not entirely without validity. As Grail Marcus observed, "Modernity was the shifting of the leverage point of capitalism from production to consumption, from necessity to wish... all ideas had to be reduced to those that could be put on the market, and thus desires were reduced to needs." Life reduced to the laws of economic imperatives, the purchase of things not because you desire them, but because it has been objectively demonstrated (through adverts and media dictated lifestyles) that you cannot live without them.

In such a climate, it was predictable that Art should turn in on itself in order to illustrate the cross fertilisation of desires and needs and how they became apparent in the art market (the market that undoubtedly made Sonnabend, in the world created by Graff, the pinnacle of the avant-garde). The same art market that, through appropriation and detournement, was supposedly the last avenue of the individualist as he strode towards his utopia of reclaimed reality.

'Plagiarism' was thus a word playing about the minds — if not often on the tongues — of many artists in the late 1980s. The basic idea, I assume, was the usual one (if there was a conscious aim, it was not ever properly expressed). The idea was to democracise Art — anyone can copy or borrow; to debunk — the intrinsic value of art being questioned by the source materials used; and also to attack the artworld's longstanding pretext of 'creative individuality'.

Once again, visual art struggles to catch up with literature. Creative plagiarism has been used openly in writing for centuries (for the purposes of association, reference, irony and inspiration, this book which you are reading shamelessly plagiarises every book or magazine

article that I have ever read). More lately, the music world too has become blatant in its environment-friendly recycling of its aural refuse, due to the advent of sampling technologies and through the work in the Seventies of the likes of Brian Eno, David Byrne and Sheffield's Cabaret Voltaire, and later Scratching, House and Acid, the music charts are now one huge cut-up of previously digested ideas, words, connections and riffs.

'Avant-garde' artists decided as late as 1988 that it was about time the contemporary art scene got on the Plagiarism bandwagon, a decision that resulted in the much publicised *Festival of Plagiarism* that took place simultaneously in London, Madison and San Francisco in January and February of that year.

The visionaries of the art world had much to say about the subject, and expressed their insight in perversely traditional forms.

The London branch of the exhibition consisted of objects that had been found and *arranged* by Simon Dickason, Ed Baxter and Andy Hopton. A hammer *balanced* on a sheet of glass; A section of wooden fencing *mounted* on a gallery wall; A series of postcards *exhibited* with barbed wire around them (the emphasis is mine) and — the piece which was chosen to emphasise "the central message of the show" — a stuffed bird perched on a supermarket trolley. (The supermarket, by the way, is considered a profound and somewhat witty motif among socially aware artists).

Although such art festivals are clearly trying to raise points about the usual subjects of Capitalism, Commodities, Individuality and life, the art forum in which such topics are raised reduces such questions down to the convenience of vagueness and the vane if erroneous assumption of superiority. (This exhibition had none of the cheek or wit of Koons, none of the technique or even the originality.) In this writer, the only questions such cringe-making material raises being a request for directions to the nearest exit. Or, more accurately, the nearest entry.

The most cogent ideas of such an exhibition are not the materials used, or the viewer's interpretations, nor even their intended effects. The important ideas here are the words, such as 'found', 'arranged', 'mounted' and 'balanced'. Despite the Festival's theme of ironic non-originality and art-for-all, the words blow away the sand and tell the true story. The words chosen by the artists who contributed still imply that the collector and arranger of objects is the important factor. The definition of reality is still edited. The contributor is still the Artist. The Censor.

One way artists such as Stewart Home and Istvan Kantor have dealt with the problems inherent in taking part in the 'creative individual' pursuit of fine art is with the invention of false names, and also multiple names (a multiple name being a single alias that is attributed to the assorted work of a group of like minded people. The name adopted by Home and various others was 'Karen Eliot', Kantor, a co-founder of the Neoist Movement, coined the more well-known 'Monty Cantsin'). The practice is useful, but questionable, in that as well as making the desired (rather obvious) comment, the use of multiple names also has the effect of removing responsibility and, as well as the pretence of, even the struggle towards individual expression.

Yet again, people calling themselves Artists re-vamp ideas that have been in use in other media for years. The production of work under collective group names and pseudonyms has been the accepted norm in Music, Theatre and Literature since time began. The significance of the avant-garde in the visual art world only now fully accepting the ideas of anonymity and collective responsibility for their work is perhaps noteworthy.

Many young painters and sculptors changing their name in the Eighties did so for reasons that were less obvious than those which caused populists to change their names in the nineteen seventies.

In the Seventies, punk performers, fanzine editors and promoters changed or abbreviated their names partly because they knew instinctively that, like actors or fashion designers, they were a part of the Entertainment Industry, but primarily because they were (or, in some cases, wanted to appear to be) signing on for Social Security payments at the time and did not want their secret jobs to be discovered. (When, towards the end of the decade, people were getting on to TV, this device failed. More than one acquaintance of this writer appeared on *Top Of The Pops* or *Revolver*, only to be recognised when they signed on at their Social Security office, to be threatened with arrest for fraud.)

For the originators, Bob Dobb's type collective names were a huge plus, as it had the effect not only of removing their culpability for much of their own work, but also served to increase their own reputation on the back of the work of others who chose to adopt the multiple name. There is also a hint of condescension involved, when one hears (one) Karen Eliot explain his use of the name by saying it is to bring "societies generalised absence of responsibility to the attention of those who did not already perceive it." I wonder if he's kidding. Perhaps he's not.

I'm confused again. Am I a lone philistine in finding so much Western contemporary polemic art dull, ugly, self indulgent and insulting to the intelligence? Am I the only person not sophisticated enough to dig this junk? I don't think so. I've never much liked the idea of religion either.

If an aware right-on sort of person wishes to say something about society or his life, why doesn't he hold his hand up and say it and dump all this obfuscating garbage? As I have already said, there is a place on this unpleasant little planet for aestheticism based on personal observation, and a place too for empty, child-like beauty. But I seem to be drowning in the rubbish of a million unoriginal little Hitlers who think they know best. Not the fault of Art, but the fault (and yes, there is some guilt to be ascribed) of the shabby system of education and commerce that are at the Art World's foundations, and a fashion victim's desperation on the part of thousands of ugly, middleclass bores to become famous.

Like Punk-cum-anar(chic) existentialist alternative muso or comedian, the activist, dadaesque, 'avant-garde' visual artist is merely a member of a cosy clique that wishes to remain marginal. That longs to be seen as beautiful and glamorous and shocking to equally predictable suburban rightwing extremists. (Like their Mom and Dad probably were.) That wishes to be seen as being elusive and mysterious and special. And thus, ineffectual.

The ones I meet seem remarkably sane and calculating and uninformed, ordinary people. But still, it's a living.

### **"ALL THE CRACKS...." (sex, lies and videotape)**

It doesn't even seem to get cooler in the evening. Turn your television set up to full volume when they're showing a grand prix, put a copy of Grace Jones singing *Pull Up to the Bumper* on the stereo at full blast and then, closing your eyes, hold your head over a saucepan full of boiling water. Add to all this the smell of exhaust fumes, baking bread, coffee, garlic, fried onions and sweet streetcorner bagels. That's what it's like walking around Manhattan at night.

The World Trade Centre rises at the south of the island like a caged nebula, the illuminated Empire State surveys its crumbling domain as if she were an antecedent of a deposed royal family, and the most beautiful building in New York — the Chrysler — makes one damn the myopic planners in London who imposed the arbitrary



height restrictions in the 1950s. God bless Manhattan Island in its sleep.

The story goes among red neck mid-Western types that if America is the Land of Milk and Honey, then Manhattan is the land of Fruits and Nuts. Times Square and 42nd Street have been cleaned-up since my last visit, though not so's you'd notice. The streetlife is run-of-the-mill neonlit sleaze; pushers, beggars, buggers, and large viet vets shouting as you walk past in a language that might as well be Cantonese. But walking around the shabby, steaming sidewalk is easy when you pretend that Frank Bruno and Chuck Norris are walking with you.

Not all the black guys standing around in clumps are trying to sell drugs or rob you — most are merely 'hanging out' (though quite what it is that Americans hang out has always been something of a mystery). Standing around, mountainous and mob-handed, in their regulation trainers and Def Jam T shirts and hats, hoping to score anything that may be going, not only helps them eek out a living, but gives them a sense of purpose and identity. Poor, unemployed people in America cannot fill time with objects or entertainments; poor people kill time. By hanging out.

It is either a tribute to America's easy-going attitudes, or an advertisement for the under-manning of the New York City Police Department that people hardly ever seem to be moved-on in New York. Most of the people hanging around the junction of Times Square and W.42nd Street wouldn't last ten minutes in London's West End without having their collars felt by one or two young men in green anoraks and stone washed jeans who flash I.D. Cards from the Met. After the Thatcher dictated clean-up of Soho by the police and Westminster Council in the early '80s, London's discriminatory policy seems to be that unless someone is a foreign visitor or businessman, they have no right to be in the West End if they want to commit the crime of standing still for longer than five minutes. Who can blame them? The place has to be kept looking nice for the tourists.

Like Piccadilly, Times Square is preparing for large scale demolitions and corporate refurbishment. One can already envisage the acres of fake marble and nausea-inducing external lifts. New York's developers and city leaders intend replacing the wank with the swank. Tatty sidestreets are destined to be ripped down and replaced by gleaming skyscrapers and faceless concrete piazzas, and the ageing theatres and bars which represent much of the city's tradition will be

darkened forever. The stupidity of the plan is confounding. The world's tourist attractions will one day all be airportised. Soon tourists to New York will be able to sit in some featureless Trocadero and pay through the nose for exactly the same cup of tepid coffee that they brought when visiting London, served to them by some uniform on legs who speaks every language but English through a forced grin. Despite the rhetoric put about by the developers and politicians, the plans have no respect for the local residents of the area, and are motivated not by the need for urban renewal, but for money.

To my left, a group of twenty large black guys, all wearing shades, stand around a few clip-boards proclaiming that black people are, in fact, the "lost tribe of Israel". Next to the clipboards is a picture of Christ, in bleeding heart persona. Over his head have been scrawled the words "The Anti-Christ". Next to him is a picture of King James I, with similar graffiti added by The Lost Tribe. At the centre of the stony-faced throng is a loud man with a megaphone, shouting out that all white people are "evil devils", sent to Earth by Satan in order to pervert and enslave God's children, the black people of the planet. In the Land of the Free, it is apparently ok for black religious cranks to incite racial hatred and tamper with images of Christ, but not alright for artists to do the same.

Across the street, some quite mad young man stands on the corner waving a bible about his head and shouting into a microphone, ranting through a portable amplifier something about Aids and repentance in the smug I-told-you-so way that so many Christian fundamentalists have when talking about sexually transmitted diseases.

Quite how some people can say that Aids is a punishment for homosexual love-making strikes me as the most illogical argument on God's Earth. After all, assuming for the moment that God exists, and is, as a Cosmic Superbeing, petty enough to revert to Old Testament nastiness against homosexuals, why then is it that the people least likely to catch HIV are homosexual women? Despite its press image, HIV is not a 'sex disease'. It is simply a virus that affects the immune system. It can be transferred from one person to another through bodily fluids in a variety of ways. It targets no-one in particular.

Aids reared its head right on que for the religious myth-mongers who have sought to capitalise on what the disease is doing to God's world. It has effectively robbed a generation of free expressions of love, linked sex inextricably with fear, made obvious the horrifying connec-

tion between the start of life and the commencement of death. It brought our technological omnipotence to its knees. It created a climate of terror which, in turn, generated a landscape of intolerance, hatred and suspicion. When you add those things up, one can easily see why religious cranks seek to use this disease to support their usually unsupportable arguments of control.

I remain at a loss to see why openly gay and bisexual people are still given such a rough time around the world. In truth, we are of course all basically bisexual creatures. Or, perhaps less emotively and more accurately, Asexual. The American writer Gore Vidal has, apparently, caused some outrage by suggesting this in his essays; though why is it outrageous for one to state what is obvious to all of us by the age of fourteen? On feeling some attractions to people of the same sex, some people naturally experiment. Of those that do, some obviously find the experience more physically and/or emotionally fulfilling than a similar experience with a member of the opposite sex — for whatever reason — and a conscious choice is made. Frankly, the only thing stopping more people from at least experimenting with their sexuality is peer group and family pressure, applied, like religious indoctrination, during the formative years. Society, like it's monochromatic historians and intellectuals, likes to deal with the world in easily manageable stereotypes which, through Society's treatment of irritating statistics, are eternally re-enforced by that treatment. The cycle is rarely broken.

The opposite sex is something of a mystery to everyone. People of the same sex are, on the other hand, a reliable and unthreatening double. The demon lover, twin brother. Away from the ridiculous polarisations of machismo and silent, yielding femininity, any closer sexual understanding between men and women must start somewhere in the acceptance of physical desires. Must start, also, with a recognition of some degree of asexuality.

Of course, not all of us actually enjoy having sex with members of the same gender. What we should recognise, however, is our sexual potential, and face the fact that society is guilty of compromising our natural, human sexuality. Men particularly are coerced into the ideal penis-pushing heterosexual 'norm' and, outside of sport or violence, are denied any genuine physical rapport with each other. It is, I suppose, our own fault. I certainly don't derive any physical pleasure from being kissed by male friends — particularly if they are large and hairy — but I think this is because of our agreed relationship with each other, rather than any genuine, purely physical revulsion.

Many more women than men 'admit' to having felt some attraction towards members of the same sex than do men. In a male orientated society, founded on the same sacrosanct seed that poor Onan wasted, homosexual activity between men is often banished even now to the grubby, secret world of toilets, backrooms and shabby motels. Literally seedy places which, again, re-enforce the self perpetuating stereotypes; to some people, homosexuality between men still equates with toilets and now, once more, disease. The Satan-sent gift to bigots and bores who wish to control others and will clutch at any straw in their search for a 'good' reason to exercise such control.

Women who have chosen to be exclusively homosexual in their practices are largely untouched by the criminal laws of England, while men who do the same thing are, in a blatantly sexist society, the butt of all manner of blunt laws, bad jokes and vilification. We are all, to some degree, responsible. The necessary legalised 'liberation' of homosexual men in the 1960s and '70s did not really free homosexuals at all. It identified and ghettoised them. Quite suddenly, homosexual men had THEIR own clubs, fashions, pubs, magazines and music. (To asexuals like most of us who preferred members of the opposite sex, such affectations actually had the social effect of distancing us still further from homosexual men. One does not knowingly trespass into a Gay club as such places — set up as a reaction to the equally ridiculous assumed uniform heterosexuality of the outside world — are usually exclusively gay, and however fashionable these venues may be, I think that heterosexual use of such places is an unfair intrusion if regulars are attending in the hope of making contacts for sex. And this, the mutual exclusivity of certain areas and lifestyles, is the problem. (The other problem is those awful moustaches). The liberalisation went in on itself, rather than spread outward. When brave men 'came out', they also, in a sense, 'went in'. Gay Liberation did much good, but it did not make it acceptable for two men to hold hands in public, or to kiss each other in 'straight' society, it merely meant that Gays were more easily targeted for both legalised and illegal abuse. Instead of synthesising into society, it divided society into factions, and provided the assumed majority with a useful scapegoat. In a synthesised Asexual Society, the perception of such things as Aids would be very much different. (And by an Asexual Society, I don't mean that we should all parade around in ill-fitting boiler suits, cropped hair, and abstain from sex. I mean that except when we are engaging in sexual activity, we should not have to be defined by our gender and sexual preferences.)

But generations of conditioning take generations to peel away, even in the most supposedly enlightened and progressive quarters. We almost expect Politicians and Clerics, who are by definition interested only in imposing their worldview on others, to take a hand in the outright persecution of people who indulge in some sexual activities which are, it can only be assumed, slightly different to those which they themselves enjoy. At this moment there are nearly a hundred men in British prisons who have been convicted only of having sex with other consenting male adults in private places. This is almost to be expected in such an uncivilised and undemocratic country, but why is it, I wonder, that organisations such as Amnesty International are more than keen to take up the 'Human Rights' banner when legally convicted violent criminals are concerned, but refuse flatly to campaign on behalf of men who are imprisoned around the world solely because of their sexual preference for other men?

The pseudo, off-the-peg morality offered to unthinking people by misinterpreted 'Christianity' is of course to blame for the persecution of those people who are identified socially as being homosexual, even if that apparently specific persecution actually effects the freedoms of us all. It is, after all, often not until one strays from the socially acceptable path that one realises just how well defined that path is.

Jesus Christ never went on record as persecuting homosexuals or bisexuals, possibly because, as a normal, healthy human, he was basically bisexual himself. Indeed, as a man apparently interested in love, tolerance, and active in the helping of those afflicted by illnesses such as leprosy, as a man who went on record as condemning not the prostitute, but those who judged her, it is surely these self proclaimed Christians, such as the unpleasant little man with the microphone in Times Square who are being heretical in not fighting for Gay Rights (or, more accurately, Human Rights) and welcoming those who are suffering from that terrible disease.

The unhealthy Christian fascination with Sex can, of course, be quite logically explained. The pursuit of Sex and, most of all, the purity of the orgasm itself renders any system of control temporarily useless, so even something as natural and healthy as sexual activity must itself be controlled and regulated. Almost all those who have occupied positions of power over the centuries have therefore tried to interfere in the private sexual lives of those who they seek to control. And the most respected and influential laws one can impose are the laws that are said to have been handed-down by God. Any God will do. In Britain and America, we use the Christian God. Laws passed in England are

given Royal Assent from the Monarch, who is also the Head of the Church of England and Defender of the Faith. Throughout Britain's constitution, implied associations with God, and therefore with what is 'good' are everywhere, thus politicians are given the RIGHT to rule.

The trick is as old as the hills. The first legal system ever recorded — in Babylon — was said not to have been drawn up by mere mortals, but by God. King Hanmurabi (2067–2025 B.C.) said that the law had been given to him by the all-powerful God Merduk, so what he said was listened to. Although the names of the deities have changed, the concept remains the same. God has become inexorably connected with the State. God has been politicised, and the appeal of a God has been utilised by almost everyone who seeks to exercise control over others. The powers that be, through their suggested connection, have therefore assumed not only the right to control others, but also a monopoly on morality. So, all wars are holy wars and all laws are good laws. The more laws we have, the better we must be. If you happen to be Gay, then it's just hard luck. When viewed in this light, perhaps Serrano's point becomes more clear.

If God, in 'His' infinite wisdom, wanted to pick-on someone for viral retribution, why would he single out gay men. Why not drug pushers or murders or New York taxi drivers?

The cabbies here are exactly the same as the cabbies you find in any other city in the world. Namely, many of them are rude, miserable, boring, and are quite the worst drivers on the streets. Here in New York though, they differ somewhat, because in New York, no taxi driver knows where he is going. Gone are the old Noo Yawkas who knew the place like you knew the back of their head, now it's more than likely that your cab driver will be called Mohammed or Mustafa, have been in town only ten minutes, and not know his St. Marks Place from his 8th Street. Many try to rip you off by starting the clock at twenty dollars — they're very original — then pretending not to understand a word of English when you point out their little mistake. A thousand pardons, grin grin. The Yellow Cabs hurtle madly along the avenues, acting as if they were marbles flicked down an alleyway. The taxi's stupid, low-slung design doesn't help. What would be considered the normal reckless driving of a cabbie in any other city is exaggerated by the relatively low perspective afforded by the seats, which also increase the feelings of face massaging G-force experienced by the hapless passenger as he is bounced over the city's cratered, steam-filled streets and skidded to the wrong destination. When you come to get out, you can of course get confused about the money and end up giving them a

dime tip when you thought you'd given them five dollars, and naturally, anybody can forget to close a car door.

The sex shops here around Times Square are pretty standard butchers'-shop windows. Bacon rashers, two pounds of sausages, surgical appliances, that must be upside-down, plasma, fat, piss and poo dog/poop dog. Furtive men from Wall Street jostle with Japanese tourists, middle-aged married couples from Queens and Hoboken (he always wears a gold neck chain and too much aftershave, she has a strip of black insulation tape over her eyes) prove how young and progressive they are by looking for their photo in the contact magazines, eyes and trousers bulge everywhere as mags are 'browsed' through. Oo-er.

I exchange my greasy five dollar bill for twenty tokens, like a child at an Amusement Arcade. There are lots of fun games to play here. I stand in my cubicle and insert my first token. A metallic visor draws up revealing a plastic window through which can be seen four of the most ugly women in the world. I think they are called Pestilence, Famine, War and Death. All naked except for regulation high heels, they sit, bored to tears, rolling around on a pile of cushions as Michael Jackson's *Beat It* blares out of a portable cassette player. How apt.

The individual booths are laid out in a semi circle around the stage area, which means that if you look around, you can make out dozens of tiny eyes, steamed up spectacles, intent stares, which eat up the image of the three fatties and one skinny as if they were visiting aliens. One woman dances half-heartedly over to my window and stands astride my peep-hole, her crotch barely six inches from my face. "Shove five bucks through the window if ya wanna see something really filthy," she says, through chewed gum. Looking at this girl's matted, neon lit cracks, I think that I already have seen something that could do with a wash, and I don't reply. She snorts, kicks the plastic window that separates us, and says "Fuck you". Quite the little charmer.

Men stand around the shadowy corridors of video booths, rattling piles of tokens and obvious hard-ons with clammy hands in their nylon slacks. One turns to me and bemoans the time he's had to wait to get a spare booth — "what da fuck do they think they're do-in? It only takes five minutes ta jack off." For once it seems that premature ejaculation is socially acceptable. I'm in the right place.

The dried smudges on the TV screen are not spittle. I check my door is locked and make sure that there is nothing wet or moving on the fold-down seat, and put another token in the slot, one finger on the

channel selector button. That's it. All human life is here. 1/2/3/4/5/6/7/8.... This research is terrible.

Video booths are strange little places, in which skeletons rattle. Secret cubby holes of completely distanced fantasy that few men admit to entering though which practically all, at some time, do. Banned by the Tory clean-up in London some years ago, they proliferate on Aids-conscious 42nd Street as never before. After all, for the viewer, voyeurism is safe sex.

Most people would suggest that viewing such videos is 'sexist' and degrading to womankind. Though that opinion can hardly be the product of serious consideration — more the result of the fashionable, 'politically correct' doctrine that dispenses with individual thought in favour of uniformity of response.

Some of these videos are, I would say, unpleasant and some are also degrading to some of the women who perform in them. It may be true to say that a small percentage of the predominantly male audience for pornography is aversely affected by it, addicted to it, only able to derive pleasure from the voyeurism and distance involved. Some men — though surely very few — may also let these fantasy images inform their attitudes to women in daily life, but such people would, one thinks, soon have their worldview changed when in contact with women in the real world.

There is still no evidence of a reputable scientific nature to link sex crimes with pornography, even though a minority of criminals have claimed, in mitigation, that pornography 'made them do it', in much the same way as Michael Chapman blamed J. D. Salinger for the death, a few streets away, of John Lennon. Happiness is a warm gun.

In reality, it is quite obvious that many of the men who 'come' here each day have no other form of sexual release. The gallons of semen that must be deposited in this slum every year must have some beneficial social effects, damping down the sexual energies of thousands of often lonely, potentially dangerous people. Look around. When West Germany legalised hardcore pornography in 1975, instances of rape and other sexually related crime dropped dramatically. Why such inconvenient, under publicised statistics are not brought into the censorship lobby's argument are clear.

I often wonder, how 'sexist' is it for a woman to watch pornographic films? Many more do than would admit to it — indeed, there are several single women and couples here today — and to suggest that no women find pornography appealing is condescending, sexist and



inaccurate. And how sexist is it for a homosexual man to watch other homosexual men on film? At least 20% of the pornography in America caters to gay men. There are also lesbian S/M magazines in California which have a predominantly female readership, lesbian targetted books such as those written by Susie Bright and Pat Califia on such topics as whipping and vaginal fisting, and lesbian nightclubs both here and in London that cater to women who turn up dressed in basques, fishnet stockings, handcuffs and all the paraphernalia of S&M usually associated with old men in porn shops.

Know your audience.

...In booth 23, he comes now. "Bless me, Father..." Falling, fallen. "... for I have sinned." Make her hear. With look to look. Songs without words.... Understand animals too that way. Solomon did. Gift of nature ... Ventriloquise. Lips closed ..."

"Thankyou" says the priest through the metal grille. "That will be thirty tokens."

Although some people may feel offended or degraded by any activity that involves sexual exhibitionism, or even nudity, many people are not. At eighteen I was offered a part in a hardcore film but turned it down as it involved having sex with other men — something which I didn't think I'd be able to manage. I was lucky. Had I been homeless at the time I possibly would have taken the job. But, would I have been being exploited if I'd decided to go ahead with it, or would I have been making a conscious decision to use my own body to exploit the situation and make money out of a predominantly old gay audience? I have friends who have worked in strip joints, peep shows, and in hard-core pornographic films. Only one of them have said that they felt exploited or degraded, some have very much enjoyed it — including one girl who didn't need the money but told me that for her it was the "best job in the world, flying to Rome or L.A. and screwing great looking guys."

Such a reaction may of course be some psychological defence mechanism, and in believing this point of view I may well be dampening my own subconscious guilt and being wilfully naive, but she was a well educated middle-class English girl who said that she liked the work and the extra money. Who was I to argue? For sociologists, censors and media hungry feminists to assume that sex stars are degrading themselves is highly condescending. Most, both men and women, have consciously entered into an agreement with their audience to have sex publicly. Although some may do this as they see no

alternative way of making comparatively large sums of money, very few do it under any duress, or to feed their sick grandmother in Queens. If anyone feels degraded, they quit. One is either exploited by working for 'bosses' — as Marxists still dogmatically believe — or one is not. I cannot see the difference if the job involves getting up at six in the morning and going down a coal mine or flying to L.A. to appear in a pornographic film. I know which job I would prefer, but then again I have no respect for either my body nor the work ethic. Are you exploiting me by reading this book? Or am I exploiting you?

Given the definition of the word, I think the more likely answer is that you and I and almost everyone else in the world have come to an unspoken symbiotic agreement, the order of which is constantly changing throughout the day as we become producer/consumer/writer/reader/employer/employee and so on. The people who cannot understand or accept the circular nature of symbiosis nor allow others to shoulder the responsibility of choice are denying the nitty gritty of the cosmos itself — the struggle against decay.

When one acknowledges the simple fact that pornography is not purely a gender related topic in which oppressive males look at oppressed females, when we accept that it should not be the function of politicians and minority pressure groups to 'mould' the way individuals think about their sexuality, and when the narrow-minded Christian 'moral' argument is also dispensed with, we are surely left only with this wrongly interpreted 'Marxist'-inspired argument that says that ALL work for 'the bosses' (or, one assumes — the paying audience) is degrading.

If there is any degradation involved, I would suggest that it is far more 'degrading' an experience to pay someone so that you can watch them have sex than it is to be offered money in order to exhibit yourself having sex.

Not only that, but when a man and woman have sex, or even when they 'make love', they inevitably become, in a sense, 'sex objects'. When they stop having sex, or finish the movie, they cease to be sex objects as surely as when a driver gets out of a car he or she ceases to be a driver and becomes a pedestrian. To say that if one engages in or views sexual activity involving a member of the opposite sex, one will forever see all members of the opposite sex as being nothing but sex objects is prurient nonsense. Men and women are multi faceted creatures, not two dimensional projections on a screen. Amazingly, people already know this. Also, it should be said, nobody legally

forces a man or a woman 'actor' into these films in the first place. They may be poor, but millions of people are poor and don't end up in pornographic videos for their survival.

In the video booths, it is not the actors — the woman and men, but the viewers — the men and women, who are stereotyped and defined only by their own sexuality. The sexual motive is the only thing that has driven them in here.

Obviously, there are elements in the world of pornography that are unsavoury. Just as on cop shows on TV, or, for that matter, in the pages of the Bible, there is sometimes an unpleasant tendency towards the domination of women, and violence against them (even though, I must say, that this is rare in the pornography that I've seen). It's as though some men resent women's sexual power over them. Hate them for their beauty, their power to — in some men's eyes — corrupt. Guilt is worshipped at the Christian altar, and women, be they Oholah and Oholibah or Jayne Mansfield, pay the price. God of course was a man, so Satan must be a woman. And only women bleed. There is, however, also much domination of men by women, and violence against men in these films, though this phenomenon is, again, conveniently ignored in public debates on the the subject of pornography. There is also the use of animals that is unfair as an animal is probably not a consenting partner. (Though speaking personally I'd rather be a pig having sex with a human than a cow being killed in an abattoir). Worst of all, there is the use of children in pornography.

The censorship lobby against pornography that brings about the unholy alliance of both right and left wing extremists often cite the abuse of children as a reason for banning all pornography. They conveniently forget, though, that the use of children in pornography is illegal in every country in the world, and is considered just as repugnant by most pornographers, and most people who consume pornography, as it is by almost everybody else. To equate pornography with child molestation and law-breaking is akin to equating gay men with the rape of choir boys.

The more that the recreational sex industry is made illegal, the more likely it is that illegal acts will take place. In Holland, where almost anything goes between consenting adults, the vice world is regulated and quite safe. In Thailand, where prostitution and pornography is illegal, it's obvious when you walk the streets of Patpong that sex with children, gangland violence, police corruption, abuse of women, and the spread of Aids are all around you and thriving,

unchecked. Like drugs or alcohol, when you push something underground, the industry falls into the hands of criminals. The people involved in the industry, and it's audience, are treated badly and — what is more damaging than anything else in wider social terms — also start to see themselves as being criminal.

It seems to me that much of the reason for pornography, and the debate that surrounds it, is to do with disappointment. Many men seem disappointed in the women they spend their lives with, partly because they have glimpsed the unreal, always unobtainable women portrayed in the advertising and entertainment media, so they seek out safe, distanced sex with others. Women who condemn all pornography out of hand seem disappointed in their men, who often look at it. Some women — a minority — seem not to understand the mechanics of being male, and are forever disappointed that men can happily look at other women and lust, and can usually quite happily indulge in satisfying sex which has no emotional connotations. (Of course, most women can do this as well, though, through social pressures, many do not like to advertise the fact.) To deny that these drives exist, in the hope that mankind can be moulded to think differently about sex and sexuality is unrealistic. As unrealistic as Queen Victoria, in the famous apocryphal story, supposedly refusing to agree to the outlawing of homosexuality between women because she thought that such things did not take place. Men and women have changed socially over the last century, but to deny lust is like denying gravity. And anyway, both men and women LIKE being treated as sex objects sometimes, and can become sex objects without becoming degraded or abused by anybody.

The atmosphere of these sex shops is actually quite sad. Sex should be an attempt at contact, but here, in these smelly little booths, there is no contact, no human communication, no love. Now, not only do men die alone. They fuck alone, too.

Thus lonely and degraded, the men become guilty, beyond their God and beyond social acceptability. There is no ego gratification, no conquest, no contact, no expression of love and certainly not very much fun here. Just self-disgust and emptiness and what are seen as the wages of 'sin' — death.

In 1984 I bribed Colin Wilson, the writer best known for his international best-seller *The Outsider*, with a bottle of claret if he'd write an article for my magazine about 'Sex, Crime, and the Occult'. In his piece, he equated the sexual gratification of the male adult with the perennial naughty schoolboy. He was quite right. Beneath the

spectre of social guilt conditioning, we still possess an element of 'lawlessness' in our sexual dealings. It is what these shops thrive on, and it is most obvious here in the sex booths, where instantly gratified little boys who've been set loose in a sweet shop of desire file out red-faced, having over eaten. The shop even has a large plastic dustbin by the door, and a small table on which is a disinfectant spray can and a roll of kitchen paper. When scurrying out, the men spray their sticky little hands and wipe themselves with the paper, which is then dropped into the bin to join the vile pile of sodden tissues, spermatozoa swimming and quickly dying in their millions.

At least they're matter-of-fact about it in New York and most other large cities around the world. In the pathetic pseudo Victorian environment of Britain, it's obvious that NOBODY has ever been with a prostitute, or bought a pornographic magazine or novel, or masturbated. Even though informed sources estimate that up to twelve million British men have had sex with prostitutes, when talking to men about such things in England, it is in fact quite remarkable how it is that the sex industry does so very well there: One would not have thought that there were that many Conservative M.P.s to go around.

The video booth I'm in is bathed in the white shadow that emanates from the TV screen, making your vision limited if you wish to take your eyes off the video. Now that my eyes have become accustomed to the lack of light, though, I can see that the walls of the booth are covered in graffiti — phone numbers — and holes. As in England, such burrows between walls are called 'glory holes' here, because reckless gay men often shove their cocks through such holes in the hope that the faceless stranger on the other side of the wall would perform fellatio.

My door rattles from behind me — someone is waiting to get in. I stand up, wait for the video to run out, then leave, hoping the next guy won't think I've been masturbating. How British of me.

Last time I was here, New York had live sex shows which seem now to have all but vanished. The one I visited, on one floor of a four storey sex supermarket, was sexless, strange and oddly admirable.

When you went in to the theatre, having paid the typically cheap admission fee of about \$3, you sat in semi darkness and silence, waiting for something to happen. Films flickered quietly on TV screens overhead, and your eyes drifted around the room. Three rows of old cinema seats had been arranged around a small slightly raised matted area of stage. This seating arrangement meant that you could sit waiting in the

half light, staring directly across the mat at the person sitting opposite you in the almost empty room. He looks at you. You look at him. He coughs and looks away. You light a cigarette and look away. The atmosphere becomes stifling. He shuffles his feet, you scratch your head. Hell, this is stupid, you feel like waving to the guy across the room, but don't think he'll appreciate the absurdity of it all. People yawn, from somewhere comes the sound of someone scratching their arse through shiny suit trousers. You feel an idiot. What are you doing here? You are just about to sneak out when two naked people wander casually on stage and lie down. A hidden speaker farts into life and soporific music seeps into the silence.

The girl is young, very beautiful, dark. The guy is about 25, oriental, slim, and sports a pretty fair sized hard-on, which juts out and waves around, looking bored. They look at each other and throw a brief smile into their partners faces. Matter-of-factly, they kiss, caress with some tenderness, they gently roll and move, synchronised with the ebbing and flowing of the music. Athletic, skilful, almost choreographed. And you suddenly realise, this is actually quite beautiful, like a ballet. The word "performance" should not usually be associated with making love, but in this context it is the correct word to use. These people are accomplished actor/dancers, telling the oldest story. This is not a turn-on, it is a piece. Unlike many art pieces and performances, it looks quite natural, normal, healthy and unforced. Steven Berkhoff witnessed a similar show in Rio, and came to the same conclusion, which relieves my guilt somewhat. Lust removed, you relax. Then suddenly, you realise that a couple of men from the audience have got up from their seats and are starting to crouch down near the couple. Their faces are only a few inches from the guys cock as it sinks in to the girl, as if they were witnessing some vital and intricate operation and taking mental notes.

Despite the intrusion by these salivating old perverts the young couple carry on banging away, seemingly quite oblivious to what is going on around them. She is probably wondering what to have for dinner, he is thinking of investing in some knee-pads. Five or ten minutes later they both feign a unified orgasm, uncouple, and stand up and take a bow. His cock looks as rigid and bored as ever. You clap appreciatively, admiring their professionalism. Even on the seedy floor of this bear pit, their integrity remains intact. They will never get interviewed by Johnny Carson, but their art, although natural to us all, is akin to a performance of Swan Lake, their skill superior to that of the

Chicago Bears. Nobody else is clapping. They smile and say thanks and skip out. A voice comes over the tannoy "Another couple will start their show in ten minutes." The conveyor belt never stops. The audience stays put, but you leave, slightly confused by it all. Perhaps you'll go to the cinema or a ballgame later.

Back in Present time, I notice that *Screw* magazine is still going strong here, sold openly on most newspaper stands. Publishing Editor Al Goldstein founded the paper in '68 on the principle that if you have free speech, you may as well exercise it by being as offensive as possible. His editorial column, wittily called 'Screw You', carries two photos of him, one chewing a big cigar while giving the camera the finger. You get the idea. Goldstein is another anal retentive who never grew up. His motto is "Do the wrong thing". What a wag.

Goldstein is a good advert for Valarie Solanas' 'Society for Cutting Up Men' (SCUM), an art piece, complete with obligatory manifesto, that led in part to her shooting of Andy Warhol in the '60s. If Solanas was offensive to men in a manner that would be universally condemned if a man were to be responsible, *Screw* also strives to be offensive, unbelievable, over the top schoolboy rubbish.

In this weeks edition there is an 'expose' of the Bangkok sex industry. The lead picture shows the investigative journalist getting a blow-job from a smiling Thai bar girl. The caption reads "Bang the cock slowly. Sultry, sloe-eyed, saronged sweeties slurp the spunk stick and stuff their squak squirters in this tale of the Gook, the bad, and the ugly." Mr Goldstein has such a cute turn of phrase.

The paper is supported by carrying adverts for the city's sex factories, and in the current climate this means that *Screw* is now heavy with ads for Phone Sex. "Hot Talk" have Bambi, Tina and Kim waiting for your call, and assure you that they are the "Best Fucking Live Line" in town. Over the page, though, on 970-4545, you can talk to "Cunt eaters and cock suckers" about "Asshole eating, Cum sucking and Bi fucking". And so it goes on, and, sadly, on.

Most companies offer "discreet credit card billing", no doubt so 'the wife' doesn't find out, though others offer a touchphone facility that not only lets callers pay their bill by tapping-in their card number on the phone, but also leave messages for other callers on the bulletin board, similar to what happens, in a much more censored form, in the U.K.

Less safe sex is still available of course. You can still call Robert, "Handsome, friendly, Discreet and Hung 9'", or call-in on Mistress

Angel Stern's Dungeon, at an address where you are urged to "crawl as fast as you can". It's a small world. "Angel" once stayed at a friend of mine's house in Brighton, so I know that she is, in reality, the writer Terence Sellers, whose books *The Correct Sadist* and *Obsession* are soon to be published for the first time in England by Paul Cecil of Temple Press. Forget Screw magazine and read them.

If the world is small, America is tiny. Screw's publisher, Al Goldstein, once produced a magazine called *DEATH*. On the cover of Issue One was a photo of the handiwork of Anton LaVey, the decapitation of Jayne Mansfield. Satan moves in mysterious ways, his non-sense to perform.

## ARMAGEDDON TIME

I wander through Midtown and come across St. Patricks church. Remembering Joey Skaggs and a dozen black-and-white movie matinees about Santas and snow, I walk up the steps to go and take a look inside. Just as I do so, the large doors literally slam shut in my face. Symbolically, I think, the church is closing.

Inside, I imagine an Irish American priest puts the body of Christ into the tabernacle, locks it, and genuflects. He wanders across the silent altar to the candles that surround the statue of the Virgin Mary and lights a Marlborough from a flame. As he inhales sharply his lungs put pressure on his over-full stomach and a loud fart is expelled, echoing through the empty chamber. He empties the tin marked "For the Poor of this Parish", and adds it to a pile of notes heading for the brave boyos back in Ireland, their murders to bless.

The sight of the illuminated church set in a street dotted with flapping American flags underlines the position of Christianity here. I sit on the hard stone steps and light-up, watching the American people pass, eyes straight-ahead down big city tunnels. Difficult to breath, hard to believe. There seems an enormous sense of oppression in the Land of the Free, among these superstitious idols. The same ones are replicated across the West, affecting even the unbelievers.

Writing in a now famous edition of San Diego Magazine in 1985, James Mills, the former president of the California State Senate, recounted a meal he had with one Ronald Reagan in 1971.

As the dinner drew to a close, the lights were dimmed as bowls of cherries jubilee were ignited and served. Through the gloom, Reagan suddenly asked Mills if he had read "the fierce Old Testament prophet



Ezekiel", then, with what Mills describes as "firelit intensity", the ex-actor "preached" to him, as if talking down to a sceptical college student.

"All the prophecies that have to be fulfilled before Armageddon have come to pass," the great man boomed, rather disconcertingly for a man who even then nurtured presidential ambitions. "For the first time ever," he went on, "everything is in place for the battle of Armageddon and the Second Coming of Christ."

When Mills responded by reminding Reagan that the bible is quite clear in saying that mankind will not be able to predict when this rather notable event will take place, Reagan replied "Everything is falling in to place. It can't be too long now. Ezekiel says that fire and brimstone will be rained upon the enemies of God's people. That must mean that they will be destroyed by nuclear weapons."

The great theologian then went about proving that, since the Soviet Union was Communist and without God, and was situated "in the North" (as is Gog in the Bible), then, sure enough, the USSR MUST be Gog, the nation that will lead all others into darkness.

It is from this warped, classically American perspective that we must view the world situation. Gorbachev may be trying to dismantle much of the iron curtain, but then — HE WOULD, WOULDN'T HE? After all, is not the Anti-Christ a charming, almost comic figure who will convince the world that he is saving the world while all the time he plans its destruction? And, hey pinko, doesn't the Soviet leader bear the mark of the Beast, or is that really just a map of Singapore that he has tattooed on his forehead?

I was walking through the City of London a few months ago and came across a crowd gathering by the Guildhall, waiting for the arrival of the great Gorby. I decided to join in the fun, and elbowed my way past a few disabled children to the front. A delivery van stopped at traffic lights in front of the crowd and the cockney driver lent out.

"Fuckin' el, what's all this abaht. Ooes comin' mate?"

"Michael Jackson."

"Fuck me. You lot must be fuckin' mad."

With this, the most ill informed person in London then drove off, disgusted, to be followed five minutes later by a half mile motorcade of gigantic black dreamcars and pugnacious looking police outriders. The large crowd chanted "Gorby", and the tattooed one waved from the back seat of his limo. I saw his hand. It didn't look like the kind of hand that would press the button. It actually looked like quite a pleasant hand, far smaller and more cultured looking than the hand

of the Duke of Edinburgh, which I saw waving from a similar looking car during a royal visit to Wrexham in 1966.

My meetings with the all-powerful do not end there. Here in New York yesterday, God's representative on Earth, President Bush, was in town to address a meeting of the U.N. As our cab bulleted along F.D.R. Drive taking us home I glanced over toward the United Nations Building helipad and saw a large helicopter parked on the asphalt. The livery of British Racing Green was a perfect background for the Presidential Seal that was painted on the side of the aircraft. So, I had now seen Mikhail Gorbachev's hand and George Bush's chopper. If only we could get them together.

When America invaded — and got beaten by — Vietnam, many of their politicians were convinced that they were God's people, snapping at the heels of Gog. When Reagan cut Medicay and other social services so that he could pour billions into SDI and the MX80, he was doing it because he really did believe it when he said that the Soviet Union was the "Empire of Evil". When George Bush talks of curtailing the rights of American women to have an abortion, or of meddling in the internal struggles of the USSR., or stopping Government funds going to distasteful artists, he is doing so because he is continuing the tradition of American leaders who — unlike many of their European counterparts — have a fundamentalist belief in the words of the Christian Bible.

They are not alone. A survey in 1985 showed that sixty-one million Americans regularly tuned-in to the TV broadcasts of evangelical preachers. Worrying, isn't it?

The few women left on the street outside St.Patrick's church hurry home nervously among the lurching down-and-outs. This is a man's world, basically because he has a bigger body and has pitted the planet with his tribal symbols of oppression and war. War fought with other men.

In Los Angeles I witnessed the spectacle of an all female streetgang. One such L.A. gang is called the Hawthorne Girls, tattoo scarred fatties who cruise the streets in rusting automobiles armed with handguns and rifles and who have, according to the L.A.P.D., contributed in at least a small way to the annual gang mortality rate of four hundred in that city alone. It makes Belfast look rather peaceful by comparison, but then again, L.A. doesn't have an army on the streets.

Although the vision of the girl gang was, to me at the time, somewhat laughable and not at all frightening — more like something

out of a John Walters' movie — I'm sure if a woman blew my head off with a .44 Magnum I would be just as unhappy as if a man did it. The new emergence of female gangs on the West Coast is a bad sign. There's nothing at all wrong in woman doing whatever they like with their lives, but how terrible the world would be if, instead of men becoming less violent, women tried to emulate men by becoming as violent themselves, thus doubling the dollop of excrement sliding around the world's cities.

The Hawthorne Girls notwithstanding, it is Man's violence that bubbles under the surface here, on the streets, in the high rise office blocks, galleries, government buildings. This complex problem is what feminists should be fighting. It's roots do not lie in porn shops — which are merely admissions to mens often unrequited sexual feelings. (Live and let live, that's what I say). No, it's roots are here, in the pseudo morality of the Church and State, which interferes, denies, or ignores such needs. The censorious morality that, in truth, informs much feminist thought and expresses itself in a borish, prudish way, in demos outside sex shops. The argument is not about feminism, but should be about equality and freedom of expression, about recognition of desires and differences and the peaceful release of such pressures. This is the civilisation denied us by the war economy, the church, the State, and badly informed pressure groups with poorly expressed ideas, who support the institutions and ideals of the oppression of such feelings. They seek not to educate or inform, but to 'mould' people who merely think differently. People who are interested in changing the world, such as radical feminists, should concentrate not on interfering with others choices at 'point of sale', but deal with understanding peoples motives and where necessary challenging the foundations of this society.

For example, how can we possibly construct a caring society when much of our philosophical thought, our self-image and our role in life is still based (particularly here in the States), on a fundamentalist belief in the rants contained in the Old Testament?

"And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the Earth. The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the Earth, and upon every bird of the air, upon everything that creeps on the ground .... I give YOU EVERYTHING.'"

Genesis

To do with as you like, it seems.

Despite Aids and the Hawthorne Girls, the world's population

will reach six billion by 1997, a billion of whom will go hungry. The Pope smiles, waves and tells his flock not to use contraceptives, because, he reckons, the Creator of the Universe wouldn't like that kind of thing, or likes to see people suffer and die of malnutrition, or something. The American government cuts its funding of U.N. Population Control organisations as these organisations condone voluntary early abortion.

The world's population increases at a rate equivalent to the population of Scotland every three weeks as an acre of irreplaceable rainforest is destroyed every second and one species of animal goes into extinction every five minutes. The breathless statistics cataloguing the death of the real world mount as the religious dogmas, which offer the fairylands of Arcadia, remain sacrosanct and deeply entrenched in the minds and laws of our politicians. Sometimes it seems that the Christian Church is planning armageddon in order to fulfil its own prophecies.

"And immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded his head be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison and brought his head in a charger and gave it to the damsel; and the damsel gave it to her mother."

Mark 6:27-28

Although America has still to discover Cliff, it has discovered Jesus. According to a nationwide Gallup Poll taken here a few years ago, thirty-four percent of all Americans (about eighty million) claim to be 'born again' Christians. Thirty-eight percent of all Christians (not just the 'born again' people) believe that the Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word, and forty-five percent believe it at least to be inspired by the word of God. In other words, eighty-three percent of all American Christians believe the Old Testament to be God's blueprint for life. According to this and other surveys, most of the people who believe in the Bible are actually women, which is odd when one thinks about how misogynistic and violent a book it really is.

It's chock-a-block full of gang rape, adultery, incest, group sex, phallic worship, husband swapping, abortion, bestiality, castration, illegitimacy, prostitution, murder, torture, animal sacrifice, witchcraft, scatology, anal fetishism, women used as human sacrifices and as the spoils of war, racism and many other unsavoury stories. No wonder it's sold two billion copies.

The message of Christ, the witchdoctor prophet who seemed to shun materialism and promote internalisation and a sense of the Spirit,

seems largely to have been either forgotten or conveniently appropriated by those seeking power. The most popular piece of the Bible seems not to be tolerance or forgiveness, but the most often misquoted “eye for an eye” bible thumping claptrap spewed forth by evangelical TV Preachers and carried out here ever since Gary Gilmor donated his eyes to medical science.

That so many Americans believe unquestioningly in the Bible is worrying indeed, particularly when so many people leave the interpretations of that book’s almost unfathomable texts to a variety of cranks.

It is easy, here on the steps of St.Pat’s, to convince yourself that ‘Babylon’, the city annihilated by God in The Book of Revelation, is New York. Babylon is, after all, “A Great City ...the home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit...all the nations have drunk the wine of her adulteries ... the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries ..” She is a city piled high with “plagues and sins” who gives herself “glory and luxury”. God will destroy the city “where all who had ships of the sea became rich through her wealth.” Babylon is the “Great city by the water”, full of “multitudes, nations and languages ... The kings of the Earth commit adultery with her” (at the U.N. building, no doubt), “the great city that rules over the kings of the earth”, where men, “gnawed their tongues in agony and cursed God because of their pains and sores, but they refused to repent”, where, “every living thing in the sea is dead,” and so on.

On the other hand, of course, New York may not be Babylon at all, but is, more like, the New Jerusalem, the city that came after Babylon in the Good Book. The city that “came down out of heaven.” The city that “shone with the brilliance of a very precious jewel” and “had great, high walls” and “looked like gold” (the red brick or “brownstone” of New York makes it the most golden of cities in the twilight). The New Jerusalem (or York) is the city that “does not need the light of the sun or the moon ... the nations will walk by it’s light, and the kings of the Earth will bring splendour to it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there.” (It is, after all, the city that never sleeps.) “The glory and honour of all nations will be brought to it..” And so on.

Babylon or New Jerusalem, New York illustrates what a subjectively interpreted little book the Bible is, though few fundamentalists seem to agree, even though much of the Bible and Christianity as we know it was not so much handed down by God as cobbled together in

325 A.D. by assorted clerics at Emperor Constantine's Universal Council at Nicea. The Emperor was interested in formulating a unifying religion of imperial Christianity to weld together the fragments of his empire. That's what he got, and that, to a large extent, is what we got left with. A blueprint of State Power.

However, it is too simple to blame Christianity, or even strange interpretations of the Bible, for all the world's ills. As a former Christian, it's quite natural for Andres Serrano to criticise religious institutions by using the motif of Christ in urine, and as Christianity has fought against humanism and evolutionary ideologies for centuries, it is an easy orthodoxy to criticise. It is, however, the fear of accusations of racism, more than a lack of understanding that prevents white people in the West from attacking the injustices of OTHER religions.

For example, the individual must also question the Zionist principles involved in the quite unjustifiable military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip — subjugating nearly two million Arabs, but to do so here in New York, a city enamoured with Israel, would undoubtedly lead to accusations of anti-Semitism. One could also question the attitudes of Hindus when it comes to their treatment of the Untouchable castes of India, and the Islamic subjugation of women in countries such as Iran and council estates in Bradford is surely revolting to any free thinking Westernised human being. And it should be remembered that, despite the cranks who threaten to bomb a London theatre for having the gall to stage Berkhoff's version of *Salome*, or the feeble minded idiots who threaten to cut arts funding because Andres Serrano wee-weed on a crucifix, that the civilisations that have been created on the foundation of Christianity are now — crusades aside — quite tolerant of different religious ideas and unorthodox practices. Look at LaVey's legality in America and weigh this against the worldwide lawlessness prompted by *The Satanic Verses*.

## VIRTUAL REALITY

Flashback. We are back under the L.A. stars once again, driving back from the opera, looking out of the taxi window at the billboard advertising that cinema still screening *The Rocky Horror Show*. The tarmac of the Freeway rushes towards you in the headlights. Perceptions of the curdling inner cosmos flicker. When a person finds his or her place in that cosmos it is because they have invented a perception to deal with the enormity and complexity of the world. A belief system edits the horror of it all down to manageable proportions, it gives a sense of

purpose, a destiny and even that which has always been unobtainable on the physical plane, even for Robert Anton Wilson: A life after death. In the Virtual Reality of Timothy Leary's computers, or Jesus Christ's weird words, or Marx's writings, we can live forever, because, even after we're gone, the ideas will remain. The unreal world is, like the wax museum, better than the real thing, because it gives us a sense of order and eternity.

Although most of mankind's invented beliefs are well intentioned, and different beliefs do lead to different practices, some of which are preferable to others, almost any belief system — any system of perceiving and interpreting reality — will do. The Jesus Christ one, the Marxist one, the Satanist one, the Dead Dog one.

Nature is unshockable, God is unconcerned. You live by the rose and die by the thorn. Better to revel in its beauty than call it a disgusting weed. Tolerance in life brings tolerance in life. Dogmatic bickering in life brings violence, censorship, ignorance and intolerance in life. We are born and we die. Virtue and sin reap their rewards in death.

"We will pass for an instant into Nature's crucible thence to spring up again in other shapes, and that, without there being any more prerogatives for him who madly smoked up Virtue's effigy than for the other who wallowed in all the most disgraceful excesses ... all of them meet with (the same) after their existence, both the same end and the same fate."

Marquis DeSade

"So God created Man in his own image, in the image of God he created him."

Genesis 1:27

Due to the effects of increased access to data and communication afforded by the Media World, the Global Village of today no longer feels the comforting caress of Authority in quite the same way as former populations did. Although the world's most censorious governments, like those in China and the U.K., have done everything to limit the amount of information reaching the general population, more information filters in to one's mind that does not fit into the paradigms constructed by earlier generations. Hairline cracks appear and these quite metaphysical concerns show-up in the material world in a variety of sneaking ways. Coins thrown at the feet of a waxwork dummy are most apparently coins thrown at the man-made physical representation of a man-made idea. The universe becomes more transparent. Death threats made to a man who is seen publicly to desecrate such an image,

on the other hand, have the reverse effect of giving that image life in the media and in the mind. Senator Jesse Helms was clinging on to his reason for existence in this, his universe. His censorship was, in fact, his way of editing the universe back down to more manageable proportions again. Christ, good, Satan, urine, homosexuality, bad. Andres Serrano's choice of imagery was an exhibition of his mind going through the same function. His editorial processes were equally linear, confrontational and supportive of the traditional structures of American Art, Religion and Society. The jar becomes cloudy once more.

Helms and Serrano are two sides of the same coin. In social terms, the function of the supposedly avant-garde and the Establishment is the same. That is, their function is one of control. The shaping of the universe down into manageable blocks. Artists share with politicians and priests this social role. Again, we have more pointless ideas and concepts to 'get behind' and throw money at and wage wars for. Unfortunately, though, the only Hell that exists is here on Earth. If you don't agree, then perhaps you should go to Los Angeles and talk to bar-bound Viet Vets about Mey Lai, or go to San Francisco and talk to the crack-head transexual we met at the Leary party, or write to the parents of the victims of John Wayne Gacy.

An Islamic fundamentalist and a Christian Democrat cannot argue about social cause and effect, because their perception of reality is different to start off with. Regardless of their artistic worth, Liberals must defend Salman Rushdie and Andres Serrano against religious zealots while at the same time paying lip service to the notion of a multi-racial, multi-cultural society. But how can one create a harmonious, democratic, multi-racial, multi-cultural society if people's beliefs all differ? The only way to do so is to disenfranchise Religion. For the first time since King Hamurabi in Babylon, divorce Religion from the State. (The Soviet Union did not do this, it simply substituted religious dogma with a secularised religion of political dogma, with the Dictator seated in Moscow rather than Rome.) An amoral, asexual, secular society in which international laws are created by the Will of the Human Race on purely democratic lines is the only workable utopia worth thinking about. 'Civilisation' means an advanced state in social development, a state of intellectual and cultural refinement. In such a civilisation — a civilisation based on synthesis — Gods would be tolerated, but would not be able to rule the world. In political terms, Ethnic groups would be rendered meaningless, as the world would be forced to realise that if the planet is to survive, it's only law would be one of tolerance.



If society decides that it is intolerant to murder or rape or profiteer from the worlds shared resources, so be it. If humanity decides it tolerable to sell children Heroin, or encourage the hunting of dolphins, so be it. The morals dictated by assorted prophets who claim links with Gods have nothing whatsoever to do with the creation of a system of running the jumbled new world of the multi cultural Global Village, if that world is to survive without the domination of a super-power dictatorship. Now, almost everybody has a nuclear weapon, a well endowed supergun, a God, a hostage, and a chemical weapons plant. Everybody has a TV.

Despite the strange morality and obvious hypocrisy of the Born Again masses, Americans are at least free to speak out for or against such madness, even if what they have to say is often rubbish. Be they the sexist extremists epitomised by New York's Al Goldstein and Valerie Solanas, or Kenneth Anger and Andres Serrano at the liberal centre. All have a legally recognised voice of dissent.

In Britain, the supposed cradle of democracy and free speech, we had our Revolutions too early. We are subjects, not citizens, and all those mentioned here could be prosecuted — like Hubert Selby's publishers were — under a myriad of some old and many worryingly new laws extant in Britain that are designed to restrict freedom of speech. Laws upheld, it should be mentioned, by the matriachal duopoly of Thatcher and Elizabeth. If Serrano was British, *Piss Christ* could have put him in the dock charged with blasphemy. Goldstein would certainly have been arrested on publication of the first *Screw* magazine, for obscenity, and so it goes on.

Sitting on the steps of St. Pat's, I'm not sure what I prefer. Genuine oppression buried beneath the smug patronising lies and self confidence of British despots — which often leads to the birth of individualists and philosophies of some artistic and social significance. Or, the more legally apparent all-round freedom of America that is often abused and throws-up bores and trite acts of defiance from thoughtless people who want to do nothing other than prove that they are free to exercise the right to be boring, masturbate in public, and make money.

Both societies — perfect 'democracies' [*sic*] — are deft, self perpetuating systems of control, which allow just enough freedom to remain the 'correct' systems. Systems that cannot tolerate the raising of questions that they cannot answer. A reality that cannot ask itself questions that would make people perceive 'reality' as being subjective, counterfeit, and enforced. A social reality that is ostensibly ob-

sessed with Truth is unable to accommodate other Truths. That is what 'control' is. Human time absorbed in self-perpetuating thought-patterns. Human time. Time to die. Much of the high art we see, which merely advertises itself and questions nothing of importance, is in this sense the intellectual pornography that oils the cogs of this dreary, silent-running machine.

A machine that churns out an endless succession of images of freedom, the props for the shadow theatre that creates the false perception of reality.

Here in America, social scientist Paul Watzonick conducted a series of experiments during which totally sane people were lied to in a systematic and calculating manner. The results were that the subjects started to behave with all the irrationality of schizophrenics and paranoid patients. In the US and Britain we have institutionalised lying, politicians lying, statistics lying, advertisers lying, journalists lying, and artists and priests oiling the machine with superstitious, subjective interpretations of the world based on such lies. Nobody knows what to believe anymore, so what the hell, anything will do.

Art is being wasted. It could be used to make people treasure themselves, their emotions and feelings. It should be used to formulate the asking of questions. An open-minded examination of Life that would re-educate and allow and encourage understanding of others, and a communication of that understanding. Hard art should be about short-circuiting the cultural control system, in which Religion and Capital have vested interests. Not about adhering to the gods of fashion, of money, of artistic technique, of exclusivity, not about witless shock value, but about wise investigation of nothing less than life itself.

The current Contemporary Art world is vying with organised Religion to become the ultimate virtual reality model. The ultimate belief system in a world that is losing its will, and its ability to live.

Manhattan or Hollywood could be a metaphor for the whole machine. The image presented as freedom could be of one icon floating in bodily fluids, one biker urinating on an altar, a film of two men having sex. The silent sound is one of words being wasted.

But incredible though it may seem, every person in the world speaks a coherent sentence that has never, ever, been spoken before.

Let's just hope that someone is listening.

Simon Dwyer, 1989.



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